Trajetórias docentes e desenvolvimento da profissionalidade: a busca por marcos que provocaram mudanças

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RESUMO

O artigo resulta de uma pesquisa sobre o desenvolvimento da profissionalidade de professores atuantes no segundo segmento do ensino fundamental. O objetivo foi identificar os marcos provocadores de mudança nas trajetórias, práticas pedagógicas e concepções profissionais de professores em posição de destaque e reconhecidos por seus pares. Foram realizadas entrevistas com professores de escolas da rede pública e privada da cidade do Rio de Janeiro e que se encontravam na fase de diversificação profissional, proposta por Huberman. A investigação evidenciou influências dos contextos institucionais, práticas pedagógicas, conhecimentos específicos e relações interpessoais. Concluiu-se que o desenvolvimento da profissionalidade não é sequencial, modificando-se de acordo com a ocorrência de eventos significativos, escolhas e ações individuais, de modo a destacar a importância da diversidade de experiências. Desta forma, proporcionando uma reflexão sobre a importância do processo *continuum* de formação nos espaços institucionais de trabalho e valorização docente.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Trajetórias. Profissionalidade. Prática Docente. Marcos. Mudanças.

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Teaching trajectories and professional development: the search for milestones that brought changes

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ABSTRACT

The article is the result of a survey about the development of the teachers' professionality active in the second segment of elementary school. The aim was to identify the milestones that provoke changes in the trajectories, pedagogical practices and professional conceptions of teachers in a prominent position and recognized by their peers. Interviews were conducted with teachers from public and private schools in the city of Rio de Janeiro who were in the professional diversification phase, proposed by Huberman. The investigation showed influences of institutional contexts, pedagogical practices, specific knowledge and interpersonal relationships. It was concluded that the development of professionality is not sequential, changing according to facts, choices and individual actions, highlighting the importance of diversity of experiences. In this way, providing a reflection on the importance of the continuum process of training in institutional spaces of work and teaching appreciation.

KEYWORDS: Trajectories. Professionality. Teaching practice. Milestones . Changes

Trayectorias docentes y desarrollo profesional: la búsqueda de hitos que provocaron el cambios

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RESUMEN

El presente trabajo resulta de una investigación sobre el desarrollo de la profesionalidad de profesores actuantes en la enseñanza secundaria. El objetivo fue identificar los hitos que provocaron cambios en las trayectorias, prácticas pedagógicas y concepciones profesionales de profesores en posiciones de destaque y reconocimiento por sus pares. Se realizaron entrevistas a docentes de escuelas de la red pública y privada de la ciudad de Río de Janeiro y que se encontraban en la fase de diversificación profesional, propuesta por Huberman. La investigación evidenció influjos de contextos institucionales, prácticas pedagógicas, conocimientos específicos y relaciones interpersonales. Se concluyó que el desarrollo de la profesionalidad no es secuencial, cambiándose de acuerdo con hechos, elecciones y acciones individuales, destacándose la importancia de la diversidad de experiencias. De esta forma, proporcionando una reflexión sobre la importancia del proceso continuo de formación en los espacios institucionales de trabajo y valorización docente.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Trayectorias. Profesionalidad. Práctica Docente. Hitos. Cambios

Introduction

How does a teacher's professional trajectory develop? What makes a difference along this path? What are the turning points that provoke change? This article seeks to answer these questions, based on the premise that a teacher's professional journey is intertwined with their personal life both shaped by the temporal, spatial, and institutional transformations they experience. These trajectories are constructed as individuals relate to and interact with different people, institutions, practices, and also through the choices that become necessary along the way. Such interactions and decisions often leave marks that can lead to shifts in the direction of a professional path, through processes of re-signification carried out by each individual. Recalling, describing, and categorizing these moments from the perspective of the very teachers who experienced them was the aim of the research presented in this article.

This is a research study based on empirical data, focused on the process of professional development among in-service teachers working in basic education. The study aimed to understand how the professional trajectories of a group of subject-area teachers working[3], in the second stage of elementary education were shaped, with the purpose of identifying events or turning points that triggered changes throughout their teaching careers contributing to greater professional autonomy and a sense of recognition by their peer.

Professional recognition is understood as the respect and appreciation shown by colleagues for the way one engages with and performs in the profession. Thus, with support from Contreras (2002), it is asserted that the development of teacher autonomy enables the surpassing of merely technical knowledge in professional practice, involving the capacity for reflection both on and within practice, through which the teacher builds self-awareness regarding their judgments, deliberations, and values.

To begin identifying the events that impacted and brought about changes in teaching practices as later regarded by teachers as turning points the hypothesis was adopted that such events/markers could be either positive or negative, as long as they were perceived as capable of provoking, in some way, the need for a decision, a change, or a reflection on teaching practice. It is worth noting that this categorization was confirmed through the accounts gathered during the investigation. Moreover, it was considered that in a teacher's professional trajectory, the development of professionalism encompasses not only personal dimensions with their subjectivities and diverse worldviews but also

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[3] A subject-area teacher is trained in a specific disciplinary field and teaches in the final years of elementary school and in high school. This differs from the generalist teacher, who teaches all subjects in the early years of elementary education (Gatti, 2010).

the professional dimension, starting from initial training and shaped by interactions with various spaces and people, which form the foundation of their teaching identity (Pimenta, 2002, Nóvoa, 1992).

Drawing on Nóvoa (2017) and Laude (2004), it is understood that teacher professionalism develops differently for each professional, with diverse paths of construction and understanding. In this sense, it is important to conduct research *with* teachers, and not merely *about* them, as Tardif (2014) emphasizes. Thus, this study is justified by the need to investigate in-service teachers and the multiple processes involved in the development of their professionalism, in order to identify the factors that have triggered new pedagogical practices and new perspectives on the profession itself. It also aims to contribute to the reconFiguretion of teacher education models that genuinely support professional development and strengthen the teaching profession. As Nóvoa (2014) points out, teachers must become protagonists of their own profession so that teacher professionalization is no longer shaped solely by external forces.

Based on this premise, this article presents the results of a study conducted with teachers, organized into four main sections in addition to the introduction and conclusion. It begins with (1) the conceptual foundation and differentiation of key terms relevant to the discussions, followed by (2) an explanation of the methodological choices made for the operationalization of the research. Next, (3) the research findings are presented, starting with the data and analyses related to the participants' professional trajectories and practices. Finally, (4) the categorization of the professional turning points that triggered change is discussed, and the article concludes by highlighting the implications and contributions of teachers' trajectories to professional development in teaching.

Distinguishing Concepts and Identifying Theoretical References

As Dubar (2012) points out, some work activities carry a symbolic dimension in terms of self-fulfillment and social recognition from a collective. Teaching can be considered one of these activities, as it appears to provide both meaning to the individual existence of teachers and the development of their professional identity, as well as recognition by their peers.

Furthermore, reflecting on the teaching profession requires an understanding of a set of terms commonly used in studies on this topic, which are often adopted from different epistemological perspectives. To this end, a search was conducted in the Scientific Electronic Library Online (SciELO) and the CAPES database, identifying articles and dissertations using the terms *teacher professionalism* and *teacher professionalization*. Initially, the reference period was from 2013 to 2018

(looking back five years), which was later expanded to cover the period from 2010 to 2018 in order to include earlier studies that could contribute to a broader understanding of the topic.

A total of 30 works were found, from which 12 studies were selected for their development of common concepts and themes related to professional development and teaching practice. These included: teacher education, professionalization, professionalism, teacher professionalism, teaching knowledge, teacher identity, teaching work, and professional development. This article focuses specifically on the conceptual debate between *professionalization*, *professionalism*, and *teacher professional development (TPD)*, seeking to identify both theoretical distinctions and connections among them.

In the literature review process, it was observed that *professionalization* is a frequently recurring concept in the analyzed works. In most cases, it is associated with the social recognition of the profession, the affirmation of a professional collective, and the definition of a professional status. This approach to professionalization recognizes it as a process that can foster increased autonomy in action, reflection, and innovation. That is, recognition and appreciation of the profession enable a different relationship with society, creating space for greater professional agency and a stronger capacity for teachers to advocate for their rights and gain access to various resources.

Gorzoni (2017), drawing on Roldão (2007), explains that professionalization has a political-organizational nature, aiming for social recognition as a professional group based on the assertion of specific professional knowledge. It is from this standpoint that teacher autonomy as intellectuals is reinforced, given their critical role in the formation of individuals. Professionalization is seen as an external process that highlights teaching and assigns value to it, through which teachers improve their status, raise their earnings, and increase their power/autonomy, as Nóvoa (1995) notes.

Cária and Oliveira (2016) discuss the theoretical frameworks of professionalization based on legal frameworks that regulate and oversee teacher education: the Federal Constitution (1988), the Law of Guidelines and Bases for National Education (1996), Constitutional Amendment 53/06, the National Education Plan (2014), and UNESCO documents (2004, 2007) on teacher profiles and professionalization. The authors find that these documents consider different levels and models of preparation for teaching, which in turn shape the extent of their impact on teachers' careers. They also point out that the definition of professionalization is often conflated with *professionalism* or *craft*, and may be associated with the idea of "incompetence" in the profession. However, "incompetence"

pertains to individual actions within the profession, whereas *professionalization* refers to the regulations and structure of the professional field.

It is important to emphasize that this concept is tied to the historical context, in which its usage has varied, often reflecting different conceptions of teaching itself and the possibility of greater or lesser appreciation of autonomy as a guiding principle.

Often, teacher professionalization has undergone (and continues to undergo) state intervention, with the state being the main entity responsible for the regulation and standardization of the profession and its training, as already highlighted by Nóvoa (2014), regarding the exogenous nature of the profession's status. This characteristic leads to a homogenization of the concept of teacher professionalization, frequently driven by decisions that are subject to government policies and international non-governmental organizations.

Shiroma (2003) explains that the low educational indicators, presented as a result of the "efficiency crisis" in schools and the "incompetence" of teachers, served as a justification for the implementation of a teacher professionalization policy that would meet the demand for more qualifications and regulation of teaching work, tied to student performance outcome policies. However, according to the author, this was a step in the opposite direction to the improvement of teaching, as it introduced a rationalization of education, associated with the proletarianization and dequalification of teachers, with actions including the homogenization of labor and the division of tasks for greater control over each stage. This transformed teachers into mere technicians, subtracting their professional intellectuality and reducing their control over their own work.

On the other hand, when professionalization is understood as a means of developing teacher autonomy and increasing the value of the profession through the distinction of specific knowledge that ensures effective teaching, the concept of *professionalism* is developed, linked to the quality of professional practice. Paula Júnior (2012, p. 4) points out that:

> We can say that professionalism is the improvement of teaching in the pursuit of professional and personal development. It encompasses continuous education or the pursuit thereof. It is the teacher's drive to learn, to grow, to increase their knowledge, to improve themselves, and to be recognized for it among peers and in society. It is an internal movement outward; it is a search, a quest because it depends on the teacher's own initiative to seek something.

In the same vein, Gatti (2010) and Ludke and Boing (2004) understand *professionalism* as the set of characteristics of a profession that articulates the rationalization of knowledge and skills necessary for professional practice: it is what the individual has acquired through experience and knowledge,

their ability to apply it in a given situation, and their approach to fulfilling tasks. *Professionalism* is unstable and always in the process of construction, arising from the act of work itself, adapting to the changing context.

Thus, teacher professionalism grants distinction to the teaching profession and contributes to professionalization. As Roldão (2007) points out when determining the specificity of the teaching role:

> A teacher, in the specificity of their role, is a professional who teaches, a specialist in the complex ability to mediate curriculum content knowledge at any level. This process is mediated by solid scientific knowledge in all relevant fields and a rigorous technical-didactic mastery, informed by a continuous meta-analytical stance, intellectually questioning their actions, with ongoing interpretation and continuous feedback (p. 101-102).

In the qualitative analysis of works addressing the theme of teacher professionalism, it is possible to recognize that the concept is discussed from four perspectives: teacher education, teaching knowledge and expertise, reflective practice, and stages of professional development.

The aspect related to teacher education encompasses studies on initial or ongoing teacher training and connects professionalism to the need for quality education, highlighting the gap between initial teacher education and the practice of teaching in everyday school life. When related to teaching knowledge and expertise, aspects of professionalism often emerge in connection with the different types of knowledge/know-how required for the profession and the emergence of recognition and appreciation of the specificity of these knowledges, thus contributing to the affirmation of the profession and the process of teacher professionalization. The aspect related to reflective practice appears as one of the main means of improving professional performance, as a way to construct and renew the knowledge of how to act within the profession, being positioned in opposition to traditional or merely technical practice.

Finally, the stages of professional development associated with studies on professionalism is another aspect discussed by some authors (Huberman, 1995; Chakur, 2005; Cavaco, 1995). With Huberman's (1995) work, considering career time, being the main reference, these studies have been presenting, since the 1990s, the phases and characteristics that a teacher's trajectory goes through, understanding them as non-linear and not mandatory, but often capable of helping to characterize teacher professional development. Thus, aspects such as motivation or disengagement in the career,

pedagogical diversification, the value attributed to the profession by teachers, and the impact of the recognition they receive on their professional lives are discussed.

Therefore, it is emphasized that, associated with the concepts of professionalization and teacher professionalism, most of the authors mentioned above have also adopted the term "teacher professional development" in order to encompass elements of professional distinction from a more qualitative perspective. Formosinho (2009), for example, points out that professional development can be seen as a continuous process of improving professional practice with a focus on promoting educational changes, conceived as a broader process than continuous training. For Garcia (1999), teacher professional development is not centered solely on the individual, but takes into account interactions with peers, the objectives of teaching, and student learning.

It is important to highlight that, in the course of teachers' professional development, the influences of school development, curriculum, teaching, and teacher professionalism through their interrelations are included. Furthermore, it is recognized that the autonomy teachers gain in their work, whether individually or collectively, is determined by their professional development, enabling the capacity to make decisions related to different curricular conceptions and the constraints imposed by curricular policies. The changes and/or curricular alternatives developed in the context of teaching practice can signify innovations and re-significations that imply new practices and the development of professionalism. In this sense, the development of teacher professionalism refers to the enrichment of what is specific to the profession, including the specific professional knowledge, practices, and personal professional identity constructed in relation to the different elements constituting the teaching profession.

Methodology: Forms of Being and Acting

The research presented here adopts a qualitative approach, with the career trajectories of teachers as the object of study. In defining the methodological choices for investigating this object, the importance of listening to teachers' narratives is recognized, as it captures how they interpreted and attributed meaning to the situations they experienced, in a context where quantification is difficult (MINAYO, 2009). The goal is not to identify an objective list of changes in a teacher's professional life, which is often already described in their curriculum vitae, nor to make assumptions, but to examine the meanings and reinterpretations that the individual constructs about these experiences.

Objectively, for the development of this study, the "snowball" technique (VINUTO, 2014) was chosen, which is used to access specific groups through referrals. The subjects are specialist teachers,

working in the second segment of elementary education in different subject areas, from four educational networks (private, federal, state, and municipal), with teaching experience ranging from 7 to 25 years. Regarding the length of service, it was hypothesized that a longer career would provide greater opportunities for identifying milestones in the teachers' professional trajectories.

As for the career length ranging from 7 to 25 years, the work is supported by Huberman's (1995) idea, according to which this professional period is characterized as a time of great motivation and pedagogical consolidation. At this stage, professionals tend to set new challenges for themselves and diversify their pedagogical actions, which allows them to experiment with different ways of organizing activities, working, evaluating, and positioning themselves. This behavior is seen as a need for commitment, as well as a way to maintain enthusiasm, fearing routine. However, it is clear that the limitations of considering only the time frame to infer professional development are recognized. For this reason, the choice of teachers was associated with peer recommendations for selecting the interviewees.

The decision to use referrals in the research was aimed at investigating a group of teachers who stood out for the way they exercise the profession, according to the perspective of their peers. To this end, criteria were established for the referral of teachers, based on the descriptors of professionalism by Roldão (2005) and the ways of affirming the position of teacher, as proposed by Nóvoa (2017). The criteria for selecting the teachers included social recognition for the role they occupy, the specific organization of their work, and the way they act; having a reflective practice based on the knowledge necessary for their role; possessing the capacity for improvisation and decision-making to overcome barriers in student learning and/or positioning themselves critically within the collective, contributing to the affirmation of the profession. It was the recognition of these characteristics by their peers that led to the selection of the interviewees.

The choice to select teachers from four different educational networks, in addition to diversifying the representativeness of the sample, was based on the need to examine the various contexts of practice, attempting to understand the differentiated institutional influences on the trajectories of the interviewees. To achieve this, the referrals began from different points, meaning individuals who did not know each other and came from distinct contexts. Regarding the choice of specialists from different subject areas, this decision was made due to the limited number of studies conducted with this group of teachers. The bibliographic survey emphasized that most research in

this field focuses on specific areas of "teaching," relying on didactic-methodological studies about ways of teaching particular topics.

To produce the testimonies, semi-structured interviews were conducted during the first semester of 2019. These interviews took place in person and outside the school environment, so that teachers would feel comfortable sharing their accounts without feeling constrained when discussing their institutions, networks, or colleagues. It is important to note that two central questions guided the interview process: How does the development of teacher professionalism unfold, and what individual aspects mark the development of teacher professionalism? What factors (from practice, training, field of knowledge, institutional influence) contributed to the development of teacher professionalism?

In the semi-structured interview procedure, the questions were developed in a "broad" manner, making the tool flexible. This allowed for a more informal exchange of information, less mechanical, and adaptations based on the language of the interviewee and the content. Laville and Dionne (1999, p. 190) explain that, in the interview, using testimony allows for the exploration of individuals' knowledge, as well as their representations, beliefs, values, feelings, and opinions. Therefore, this methodology fits the characteristic of continuity. In the human interaction conception, the participants are co-creators of the process, constructing knowledge about reality (Marcondes, 2010). Thus, it was possible to learn about the trajectories of these professionals, perceive different feelings through the way they expressed their opinions, and identify how they interact with spaces, people, and face unexpected events.

The research sought balance in the representation of teachers' work across different educational networks, comprising four teachers from each of the networks (federal, state, municipal, and private). In total, 16 teachers from 15 different educational institutions were included, each working in different subject areas. The aim was to verify whether there would be signs of the influence (or lack thereof) of the educational networks, relationships with peers, or subject areas on the development of these professionalities, as recognized by their colleagues. With this reference group of teachers, the study explored and categorized their educational backgrounds, trajectories, and pedagogical practices in search of the milestones and changes provoked in each process of professional development.

The Teachers and Their Paths: Between Knowledge and Practices

In order to contextualize and highlight the protagonism of this select and specialized group of teachers, this section of the article is structured. Starting with the educational trajectory of the 16 teachers, subjects of the research, it was identified that the initial training of most of them (14) took

place at public higher education institutions, with all interviewees (16) having attended in-person courses. Given the findings, it is interesting to highlight that the data diverge from current studies, which show a growth in teacher training in the distance education (EaD) modality. According to data from the Higher Education Census (2021), the number of enrollments in higher education courses in EaD grew by 474% between 2011 and 2021. In 2011, EaD enrollments accounted for 18.4% of the total, reaching 62.8% in 2021. However, it can be assumed that this difference is due to the gap between the time these teachers completed their training and the expansion period of EaD, which began in the late 1990s. The average time of professional experience of the interviewed teachers is 15 years.

It was also observed that the teachers made significant investments in their profession (13 out of 16 interviewed) by pursuing higher levels of education through postgraduate studies (latu sensu: 2 teachers, stricto sensu: 11 teachers). This reality aligns with Goal 16 of the National Education Plan (PNE) (BRASIL, 2014), which aims to provide postgraduate education for 50% of basic education teachers.

Regarding the ongoing training offered by the institution or educational network where the teachers work, the majority of responses indicated that they receive encouragement based on the dissemination of information, advertisements about events, or through training provided by the institution itself. However, despite the discourse of valuing this training, its implementation by the institution or network is hindered by scheduling problems and the possibility of complaints from students' parents, making it always dependent on coordination between the teachers themselves. The influence of networks and peers is clearly perceived. The federal network appeared to be more supportive: the teachers (4) reported receiving encouragement regarding scheduling, leave, and funding. The private network provided more suggestions for self-training (2), followed by the municipal network. In the state network, the responses did not indicate support, only dissemination. Given this limited scenario of support for the ongoing training of teachers, this research is again justified, as it seeks to identify the real milestones that trigger professional development among teachers.

Regarding the choice of teaching by the interviewees, all pointed to it as a conscious option, even when it came about by chance, although highlighting that, in some cases, "choosing one thing means giving up other options." Using the word cloud tool, the terms used by the 16 teachers in their accounts of how they became teachers were quantified, emphasizing the nouns "choice" and "teacher(s)" as central elements in their responses. It was evident that the concept of teaching as a

vocation is distanced from this group of specialist teachers (referenced by their peers), transitioning into other forms of representation. This finding is noteworthy because vocation is a constant element in several studies that investigate teaching (Vieira, 2002; Gatti et al., 2019). As Nóvoa (2017) argues, are the teachers selected in this research affirming and assuming teaching as a profession? Could this be an indication of the development of professionality?

Figure 1 – Word cloud highlighting the terms that indicate "Choice of teaching" among the 16 teachers surveyed

Source: Own creation.

Of the 16 teachers in this group, eight reported choosing the profession due to influences from other teachers (either from when they were students or those who work in the family circle). Other influences mentioned were the area of knowledge, contact with the profession, the family's cultural capital, and living conditions. According to Silva and Krung (2012), when we choose a profession, what motivates us are the identifications and knowledge we have, based on experiences and life events that are part of our trajectory.

Regarding the places where the 16 teachers work, it is important to consider that the educational networks in which they operate have distinct structures, organizations, and characteristics. Additionally, they differ internally according to the size of the institution, its location, the public it serves, and the prevailing economic conditions, influencing in varying ways the teachers' work and the development of their professional identity. In this research, most of the interviewees reported having worked in another educational network different from their current one, which means they have experienced different institutional influences in their careers. It was noted that working in another network occurred less frequently in the group from the federal network, which can be

13

explained in relation to salary and career plans offered. On the other hand, passage through the private network often appeared as the opportunity for their first job, which can be justified by the specific processes of the institutions that provide entry opportunities through recommendations.

Regarding the educational segments, most of the teachers, in addition to working in elementary education (grades 6-9), also work or have worked in high school. These segments share similar characteristics regarding training requirements and organization, with several class periods in one day and different teachers, as well as a higher degree of maturity and autonomy among students.

In their teaching trajectories, influences from peers were perceived in their career choices, as well as influences from educational networks in how they accessed the profession and its organization. Some interviewees have relatives who are teachers and, even from a different perspective, have lived through the profession in some way. Former teachers were also pointed to as positive role models — or not. Furthermore, the experience of teaching as a substitute or accompanying colleagues helped reinforce the choice to become a teacher.

When exploring the actions of this group of teachers regarding their teaching practices, planning was pointed out as an important element, being used to ensure greater rigor in choosing activities for their classes or for classroom management. According to Libâneo (2013), planning is a teaching task that enables the teacher's own development, as it is not only a means to program actions, but also a moment of research and reflection on objectives, content, and didactics. Consequently, given the complexity of teaching practice in articulating different dimensions of teaching — technical, human, and socio-political, as pointed out by Candau (1985) — planning is a moment of choices that incorporates both the school's curricular objectivity and the cultural subjectivity marks of the teacher and students.

When reporting their daily actions in the classroom, the teachers highlighted a variety of resources and strategies used to teach the content of their subjects, which aligns with the statement about the importance of planning for more appropriate choices, such as the use of PowerPoint, films, music, documentaries, elements of nature or the school space itself, as well as the use of textbooks.

Also noteworthy in the practices carried out by the teachers are the organization of theater plays, picnics, the use of social media to answer students' questions, and a rewards system. One of the interviewees further reported developing what he called "the art of teaching without teaching," referring to the use of active and creative methodologies that involve - in a reflective and participatory manner - the student in all stages of the learning process. However, in reality, both the use of different materials and strategies appeared as motivating elements, with the relationship between the teacher

and the student being the main focus of these practices, as indicated in studies on relational didactics (Mesquita, 2020) and its potential in the education of adolescents and young people.

Regarding the teaching networks, of the 11 testimonies that pointed out, with greater or lesser frequency, the use of different materials, 3 belong to each of the networks (private, federal, and municipal), and 1 belongs to the state network. Regarding the variation in the use of strategies, 12 indications were made, with four from interviewees in the federal network, three from each of the private and municipal networks, and two from the state network. Thus, the data produced by the research point to a slight tendency toward a lower variety of material uses and diversified strategies among teachers in the state network.

The teaching practices were also investigated concerning students' difficulties or unexpected outcomes. In this case, the length of time in the profession emerged as a factor contributing to experience, allowing for greater ease in facing a problem and more clarity in selecting the action to resolve the situation. Most of the actions to solve difficulties were based on a change in practice, with reflection and dialogue serving as the connecting elements for this modification.

It is important to understand the characteristics of a reflective teacher, as Tardif (2018) suggests that the notion of the "reflective professional" is impoverished in the field of education, with an instrumental view of Schön's ideas in light of current socioeconomic demands and requirements. Reflection must be conceived as a principle of social understanding, as a shared professional practice, recognized by others, and critical. The reflective teacher is one who can reflect throughout their professional practice (before, during, and after), in a critical process about their own beliefs, not with a private focus, but a social one.

More broadly, the data indicate a commitment and concern from the teachers regarding the different demands of the students, anticipating adaptations and changes in strategies, seeking methods and activities based on partnership and student autonomy, a characteristic contrary to passive learning. However, how did the teachers reach each of the stages of professional development that the data point to? What were the turning points that triggered professional changes? Let's see the following.

Professional Milestones

In this exploration of the personal and professional lives of the 16 interviewees, and in response to the main objective of the research, 44 milestones were identified that triggered changes throughout the professional trajectory of this group of teachers. These milestones were pointed out by the

interviewees when asked about the changes they perceived in their professional trajectories and whether they identified any significant events that caused and defined such changes. Thus, these 44 milestones were categorized as either positive or negative, based on the qualifications made by the reflections of the interviewees about the situations they experienced, considering the influence of external elements and the subjective aspects of the teachers' own lives. In this way, 30 milestones were identified as positive, and 14 were indicated as negative. However, what were these milestones? Boxes 1 (negative milestones) and 2 (positive milestones) were constructed to help answer this question.

Of the 14 milestones categorized as negative, presented in Box 1, the institutional and practical dimensions within schools are the most common in the teachers' accounts. These include: violence, functioning of the system, negative or nonexistent communication with peers, difficult classes, student failure, reduced teaching staff, excessive workload, and small working hours at the institution.

Box 1: Negative Milestones Pointed Out by the Teachers in the Research

Negative Milestones	
Violence and Professional Disrespect (family issues of students and/or fellow teachers being assaulted)	3
System Functioning (devaluation of the profession and structure of public schools)	3
Negative or Null Interaction with Peers	2
Difficult Class (indiscipline)	2
Failure of a Group of Students	1
Reduced Teaching Staff (difficulty in finding peers)	1
Excessive Workload	1
Small Working Hours at the Institution	1

Source: Own creation

Among the 30 milestones categorized as positive, presented in Box 2, the dimensions of education and temporality (chronological) stand out as the most frequently mentioned. Reported milestones include: the teacher's own education, time spent in the profession, change in student demographics (grade level or educational segment), good relationship with peers and contact with new teachers, change of environment, contact with former students, intervention to help a student, and the teacher's own experience of motherhood or fatherhood.

Box 2: Positive milestones reported by the teachers surveyed

Positive Milestones	
Master's degree, courses, research development, teaching residency, and access to culture	7
Years of teaching experience	6
Change in student population	4
Positive relationships with peers and contact with new teachers	3
Change of environment	4
Contact with former students	3
Motherhood or fatherhood	2
Intervention on behalf of a student	1

Source: Own creation

The 44 positive and negative milestones were identified throughout the professional trajectories of the interviewees, corresponding to the variety of environments in which they worked. However, the specific influence of each educational network could not be mapped, as the teachers' accounts did not provide evidence isolating this variable. It is worth noting that the listed milestones were considered the most significant by the teachers, as they led to changes in their practices and in the ways they conceived teaching.

However, it was observed that a milestone categorized as positive was not necessarily associated with constructive changes in the teacher's practice. The same applied to negative milestones, which, in some cases, contributed to constructive changes in the teacher's performance and in others, they did notas quantified in Box 3.

Box 3: Relationship between the origin of the milestones and the changes they prompted

Origin of the Milestones	Constructive Changes	Non-Constructive Changes
Negative origin (14)	3	11
Positive origin (30)	29	1
Total	32	12

Source: Own creation

Despite this, it was found that the milestones of positive origin led to more constructive changes (29), just as those of negative origin resulted in more negative or non-constructive changes. However, this does not imply a direct link between the classification of the milestone's origin and the resulting change. On the contrary, one positive-origin milestone, related to a change of environment, triggered

a non-constructive change according to one teacher, due to the shock of facing the reality of the profession.

It was also found that indiscipline, student failure, and difficult relationships with peers — all negative-origin milestones — led to constructive changes in the teachers. The educators explained that these changes were made possible through self-reflection, which allowed them to distance themselves from the experiences, critically assess the situations, and "learn from them." The study's analyses make it clear that the milestones, regardless of their origin, brought about changes in the teachers' practice whether in their way of acting, interpreting situations, or relating to others.

In addition to being classified by positive or negative origin, the 44 milestones were also categorized into six dimensions, based on their most evident characteristics: relational, institutional, formative, chronological, personal, and practical. These dimensions will be described in the following sections. Based on interview data, these six dimensions were also linked to the type of change they generated either "constructive" or "non-constructive" in the teaching profession. The aim was to determine which dimensions had the greatest influence on professional development.

The classification of changes as "constructive" or "non-constructive" was based on the data collected from the interviews, taking into account the teachers' subjective experiences. Constructive changes indicated an expansion of some knowledge or skill, while non-constructive changes revealed frustration or resistance on the part of the professionals.

In Box 4, it becomes evident that most of the changes observed were related to milestones within the relational and institutional dimensions. However, the milestones in the relational dimension led to more constructive changes, while, conversely, those associated with the institutional dimension resulted in more non-constructive changes. This underscores the importance of including in the discussion the relevance of developing relational competence within the teaching profession— whether among peers or with students. On the other hand, the negative influence of institutions on teachers and their practice reinforces the hypothesis that these environments have prioritized their regulatory role over fostering an institutional climate conducive to constructive professional change.

Box 4: Relationship between the dimensions of the milestones and the changes they triggered

Dimensions of the milestones	Constructive Changes	Non-Constructive Changes
Relational (17)	12	5
Institutional (10)	3	7
Formative (7)	7	0
Chronological (6)	6	0
Personal (2)	2	0

Practice-related (2)	2	0

Source: Own creation

Although the milestones mentioned are not exclusively linked to the teachers' current educational networks, it became clear that the institutional effect has been identified as a significant factor influencing teaching work consistent with studies on the "school effect" (Bressoux, 2003) either contributing to or hindering professional development. In contrast, the "teacher effect," as noted by Marafelli (2011), becomes prominent in environments that value collaboration and teamwork, fostering student learning and addressing challenges. This refers to a committed professional, regardless of the environment in which they work (Marafelli, 2011).

As for the constructive nature of changes in the formative dimension (such as training courses, postgraduate studies, and professional development meetings), it once again highlights the importance of teacher education and the various types of knowledge that accumulate and are mobilized throughout their careers. These contribute to their professional development and to the expansion of their professionality, as corroborated in the teachers' testimonials. Garcia (1999), Tardif (2014), and Nóvoa (2017) emphasize the need for teacher education to recognize specific professional knowledge and to intertwine education with the profession, enabling a process of renewal of both individual and collective teaching practices.

Regarding the constructive changes that occurred within the chronological dimension, these were identified by teachers who associated them with the passage of time and recognized them at various stages and moments in their teaching careers through reflective recollection during the interviews. Time is thus understood as a component in the construction of professional identities—a contested space shaped by how one experiences the profession, incorporating meanings from both personal and professional life histories. For some teachers, time represents an opportunity to reshape identities and accommodate innovations in order to embrace change (Nóvoa, 2013).

As for the personal dimension, milestones such as becoming a mother or father were cited by teachers who associated the experience of other social roles those of parenthood with constructive changes in their teaching profession. These roles, although seemingly external to this study, are deeply intertwined with the teacher's professional identity. These new roles, which influenced the personal lives of the teachers, also shaped their perspective, relationships, and decision-making in

their educational practice. As Nóvoa (2013) points out, teachers' private lives are part of their professional lives, as the teacher is also a person and an important part of that person is the teacher.

Constructive changes related to the dimension of teaching practice such as interventions aimed at supporting students or the development of a differentiated perspective were deeply informed by experiences gained over time (chronological dimension) and consistently mediated by reflection. These changes reflect a developed attentiveness toward others, which became a key factor in transforming the actions of the interviewed teachers. This reinforces the idea that there is no pedagogical neutrality in teaching, as Tardif and Lessard (2009) argue teaching is a profession grounded in human interaction, a reality acknowledged by the teachers through their constructive professional transformations.

Finally, it becomes evident that reflection stood out among the milestones and constructive changes. However, this discussion must be further developed to avoid a conceptual oversimplification, as warned by Tardif (2018). While acknowledging that reflection is a human activity and that every professional reflects on and during their practice, the analysis must focus on what is being reflected upon. Multiple elements and dimensions are activated in this process, and it cannot be reduced to a single guiding thread for recognizing and theoretically solving problems. As Tardif (2018) points out:

> It is not possible to understand a social activity (such as teaching and learning in school) without considering the dispositions, motivations, meanings, or intentions of the person acting with others in a given social situation. (...) the principle of the actor indicates that social activity actually involves room for maneuvering, choices, and decisions on the part of the actor engaged in interaction and in contingent social situations (p. 395).

By expanding the idea of reflection on reflection itself, we uncover the complexity involved in the act of reflecting made possible through the necessary distance that allows for critical thinking. It is important to recognize that this process is not solely individual in nature. The capacity for criticism is nurtured by the identification of difference, either through confrontation or integration with it.

Thus, the experiences provided by the milestones presented in this study call attention to the importance of teacher education and professional development. Changing one's practice is closely tied to the development of professional identity and the way the profession itself is perceived. From this perspective, it becomes essential to offer opportunities for experiences within the field of teaching across varied contexts interconnected by relationships of different kinds, whether between teacher and student, among peers with differing levels of experience, between teacher and school leadership,

or between the institution and the broader education networks. Moreover, it is crucial to acknowledge that each of these actors and institutions is imbued with subjective elements that emerge in these interactions and influence the reflective process especially when reflection is understood in its multiple conceptions (Nóvoa, 2017; Ludke & Boing, 2012; Garcia, 1999; among others).

Final considerations

In this research, it was possible to perceive that the subjective element was present in the professional trajectories of the teachers in the selected sample, as well as in the peers' indications of these teachers as professional references for the interviews, with the aim of hearing their testimonies about their lives, milestones, changes, and conceptions.

It is evident that the development of teachers' professional careers includes the evolution of the school, the curriculum, teaching, and teacher professionality through their interrelations. Furthermore, teachers' professional development is directly related to the development of the school as both a space for teacher education and a space for professional practice, within a perspective of constant change. As Garcia (1999) emphasizes, few would deny that the professional development of teachers and the improvement of the school institution are two sides of the same coin it is difficult to think of one without the other.

The autonomy that teachers are able to achieve, whether individually or collectively, is shaped by their professional development, which enables them to make decisions related to different curricular conceptions even knowing that these are tied to educational policies. Curricular changes within the teaching context can signify innovations, leading to new practices and the use of different materials. These changes also create new demands for teacher education when the school is viewed from a dual perspective: as a place for training and as a place for professional performance.

The development of teaching, as a teacher's function, relates to how it is conceived—either as a technical task or as a deliberative practical activity with an ethical dimension (Garcia, 1999). This allows for the development of varied forms of reflection on practice and the construction of different types of knowledge. Throughout the trajectories, reflections, and milestones, it is evident how the development of teacher professionality refers to the enrichment of what is specific to the profession, including specific professional knowledge, practices, professional identity both individual and socially constructed and the relationship with various constituent elements of the teaching profession.

On the other hand, as Massabni (2011, apud Gorzoni, 2017) points out, it becomes clear that the interpretation and way teachers deal with conflicts presuppose different levels of construction of

their professionality. In line with the findings of this research and based on the teachers' narratives that characterized them as a group, it is concluded that the professionality of the interviewees develops in distinct ways, being influenced by milestones that represented unique experiences in each career trajectory.

These experiences were interpreted according to each participant's cultural, personal, and professional background, highlighting diversity and pointing to different ways of being a professional teacher and of asserting their professional identity. It is concluded that the experiences provided by the milestones exposed in the study call for attention to the enhancement of teacher education and professional development understood as elements imbued with professional aspects that require greater recognition, without disregarding their relationship with personal factors. Thus, the evidence found underscores the need to invest in higher levels of education, continuous in-service training within schools, allocated time for professional development activities, peer exchange and planning, good working conditions (in terms of physical infrastructure), the development of relational competence, and fair compensation.

An ongoing investment in teacher education was evident, highlighting the need for greater interaction between theory and practice and for addressing topics that are increasingly present in classrooms, such as inclusion, diversity, and inequality. The variety of contexts and experiences proved to be enriching elements in these professional trajectories, suggesting important considerations for initial teacher education. In the practices of these teachers, relational competence stood out, allowing for a more attentive and empathetic understanding of others' perspectives and positions. Throughout these trajectories, the school networks emerged as the most significant influence, followed by peers and subject areas of specialization.

Finally, at least for the time being, and with the understanding that the researcher's perspective inevitably influences data analysis, it is considered that all the data produced are situated within the broader field of teacher education and open up possibilities for further investigation such as studies focused on teachers' life stories to examine how their personal lives influence their professional practice, or the expansion of the interviewed sample group. This would allow for broader comparisons across school networks and institutions, deepening the understanding of their influence on the teaching profession.

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