

Critical incidents in headteachers' professional paths

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Abstract

School management is considered one of the greatest challenges in achieving quality standards in contemporary education. Understanding the path of its main protagonist, the manager, living in a time and context that is different from those in which he/she acts, is essential to guide continued career management as well as to re-advise the initial career of teachers and future managers. In order to contribute to this knowledge, we present the result of a biographical-narrative research project that seeks to identify the critical incidents present in the professional lives of school managers from a medium-sized municipality in São Paulo state, Brazil. The answers to a questionnaire made it possible to characterize 25 managers, 32 of which being from school units in the city, and to select nine for interview. The interviews, which were transcribed and organized into biograms, showed that these professionals, mostly women, unlike the men surveyed, did not direct their careers to a role in management. Most of the regular critical incidents on their professional paths refer to the influence of supervisors who recommended them or encouraged them to study for admission tests related to management; the birth of their children, which motivated them to progress in their careers and/or promoting a break for future investment; their initial training, for many the Faculty of Education, was considered by participants as being insufficient for a role in management. It is considered that the career in management must be intensified as a continued career and be revised/alterd from its initial background, so that managing activities correspond to the objectives of a high quality education.

Keywords: Career, Headteachers, Critical incidents, Professional paths.

Introduction

In a period of global changes, education faces challenges, which sometimes are perceived as compelling and a partial solution, in a world where social, economic, political and technological changes occur at increasing speed, and the concept of quality is closely linked to the ability of an educational institution to meet this dynamism. In this direction of thought, it must remain responsive to the emerging issues and interests of children and young people, without losing sight of the basic training to provide them with tools to develop skills and competencies that are necessary for life in society. Furthermore, it should be able to provide for itself, autonomously. All this corresponds to the fact that it is no longer possible to design a silent, inflexible and merely reproducing school as it once was.

Actually, the questions seem huge and the concrete solutions to educational problems - historical and socially dated – certainly, constitute a challenge to school management, which needs to be understood through new perspectives, by responding

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to organizational and social demands. The management team - in Brazil, consisting of the principal, vice principal and school coordinators - expect to comprehensively view management activity and the competencies required for their performance. The development of these competencies, a key factor for ensuring the quality of teaching, is the challenge being taken on by actors at all levels of education systems (LÜCK, 2009).

The new context has promoted scientific production regarding school management, especially since the 2000s, focusing on democratic management, but research projects that deal with the head teacher and his/her work are still few, not accounting for 1% of total publications, theses and dissertations in the area, which indicates the need to deepen the knowledge of those who have the democratic and participative orientation of school education as a task. Thus, understanding the professional careers of school directors (managers) - the main responsible professional for coordinating the educational process at schools - was the aim of this research (Master's level), conducted in a mid-sized city in the Paulista Paraíba valley, São Paulo, Brazil, whose results are reported here. In the narratives of their journeys, we tried to identify the key critical, personal and professional incidents (if such a separation is possible) that mark school management.

The profile of these headteachers, despite being confined to one region, responds positively to the profile of the Brazilian school manager, prepared by Victor Civita Fundação. However, it reaffirms specific features of a manager from the Brazilian southeast region, where access to the job is mostly through admission tests, which is different from other regions of Brazil where access prevails by way of appointment or election (FUNDAÇÃO ... 2009).

Male and female headteachers: competencies and profile

In Brazil, along with the promulgation of the 1988 Federal Constitution, education - understood as a duty of the State, and a civil right - demanded a new way of being administering in order to meet the principles of equal conditions for access and longevity in school; the freedom to learn, teach, research; the pluralism of ideas and pedagogical concepts; the free public education in official establishments; the enhancement of teaching professionals; the democratic management of public education; and the quality assurance (BRASIL, 1996).

To think of the organization of the school and its management in the context of globalization and democratization led to the resizing of the linkage mechanisms for participation and collective construction of pedagogical projects. It was observed in Brazilian education the search for vitalizing the School Boards and other boards, the aim being to involve different segments of the community within school decision-making. Hence, the old school found itself, suddenly, under the requirement for debating the school principal selection process and the participation of the school community in the construction of pedagogical projects.

The public school as an institution, whose responsibility and social function relate to human development through political, social and pedagogical practices, should have a distinct management of the administration, in general. In fact, according to LÜCK (2000), "it goes beyond the concept of school administration, and requires a special performance by headteachers" (LÜCK, 2000, p. 16).

There had not been many systematized studies about school administration until the first half of the twentieth century, but in the second half, there was an approach to that area by teachers and researchers in educational administration. Still, the school administration training courses maintained a strong academic and detached component of practice. And, in practice, the school administration is based on assumptions of business administration, disregarding the particularities of the educational field and focusing more on technical aspects than in teaching aspects.

The change of nomenclature – from *administration* to *school management* - by itself, would not guarantee a change of conceptions able to make changes in the structures of the courses and the professional performance of managers. The Teaching courses, while focusing on teacher formation, continue to be one of the criteria for exercising the manager function / school principal, usually with the same characteristics of the course of the last century: based on tight disciplines and far from correlation of theory and practice.

However, in Brazil, there are a number of highlighted initiatives, particularly those initiated by the federal government itself in partnership with different public universities and in collaboration with states and municipalities, above all was the implementation of the National Programme of Headteachers of Basic Education (aimed at principals, vice principals and coordinators acting within Basic Education of the public school systems), coordinated by the Ministry of Education and Culture (MEC), through the National Institute of Studies and Research (INEP) (BRASIL, 2009). In São Paulo, although only one federal university integrates the program, even the State Department of Education (Seesp) placed in progress different actions with the same objective: to implement the principles of democratic management in their school units.

Specifically, in relation to the school principal, the Resolution 52/2013 of the State Department of Education inclusively offers skills and competencies under five dimensions of management: participatory, pedagogical, human resources, physical and financial resources and educational results management, stating that the principal “should [...] promote actions aimed at the coherence and consistency of an educational project that is focused on the complete education of students, while promoting meaningful learning that enables the personal and the social preparation for his/her entry into the world of work” (SAO PAULO, 2013, p. 15).

Recent research on the profile of headteachers in Brazil shows that the majority are woman. Although their presence (high during the first levels of education such as early kindergarten education) decreases for men in high school. Similarly, younger professionals are concentrated in the early levels of education, and older professionals at the higher levels. Managers have an average age of 36-55 years; most have a degree in Pedagogy from private schools and have a graduation in a *specialization* course. Their initial training did not prepare them for management, this value positively attributed to the specialization courses. Despite the valuation of initiatives such as investment in teaching materials, which continues the education of teachers and evaluation of performance, they resent the poor wages, teachers with good training and their frequency at work, as well as the physical structure of schools – the conditions, according to the managers, which is fundamental to the quality of teaching (INSTITUTO ..., 2010).

The feminization of the Magisterium in Brazil (which began and developed in the second half of the nineteenth century and into the first half of the twentieth century) is linked, according to Louro (1997), among other factors, to the increase in vacancies at school and the urbanization and industrialization process, which expanded job opportunities for men, leading them to find higher-paying jobs. The entry of women took place in primary education, in the discourse that female characteristics were consistent with the expected profile of a professional designed to deal with little children, thereby legitimizing their work as an extension of family education, which contributed to its devaluation as a professional. According to Vianna (2003), the premise that women are naturally “capable of caring for and educating little children, reinforced the low public investments or even the absence of broad policies for primary teacher and in service education “ (VIANNA, 2003, p. 414).

If, until the mid-twentieth century, schooling by the Magisterium Schools set up as a means of cultural integration and social advancement for women in the Brazilian middle class, the conducting education, then, it was not carried out by them, therefore, as the number of females entering into the profession increased, the men teachers moved to administrative positions with higher wages. Ferreira (2008) adds that this absence is also related to the responsibilities assigned to women: the domestic activities and the family conditions, which hindered (or even blocking) their rising to positions of leadership.

Despite women, in recent decades, having advanced, in terms of vocational qualification (being, today, numerically ahead of men in terms of educational background), it remained to them to further advance their participation in professional organizations, giving rise to key issues regarding their strengthening in the labor market. One example of this would be the representation of women at the State Directorate of Collegiate of the Teachers Union of Official Teaching in the State of São Paulo (2014-2017 mandate), comprised of 85 principals, of which 57 are men and 28 women. It is necessary to emphasize that its presidency is under the command of a woman (APEOESP, s/d).

The methodological options

The choosing of the narrative-biographical approach (BOLIVAR, 2002) is due to the fact of allowing the subject to experience a self knowledge process and at the same time allow the researcher to understand the meaning of what was experienced. This perspective made it possible to understand the ways in which managers give meaning to their daily work and the meaning that they attach to the influences of past experiences about it, whether they were considered it positive or not (BOLIVAR, 2001).

In order to understand the main influences on the professional development of the headteachers, it is necessary to understand the routes they took and to analyze the events which are relevant. These significant events are called *critical incidents*, which are described by Bolivar (2002) as events that occur in their life trajectories. These indicate a break, which are significant for those who experience them and replace them with the changes of direction during the course of life. Sa (2004) states that they are unforeseen situations, relating them to non-normative life events (a

category present in the study of human aging), associated with biological, cultural and environmental events, whose occurrence is not predictable and does not have a universal character, such as divorce, accidents, illness and births.

However, according to Almeida (2009), these critical incidents are considered relevant only when the subject reaffirms them as being so. Thus, the reflection and analysis performed by the subject on his/her own reporting bring the situations that can be listed as critical incidents, which are identified with positive or negative references. Thereby, analyzing biographical reports from the perspective of critical incidents allowed the reconstruction of the professional careers of teachers who, throughout their careers, have become school principals, thereby enabling the identification of significant experiences during teaching practice that have focused on his/her choice of profession and influenced their management practices. The narratives of managers bringing memories that can explain many of their usual practices; these are based on experience and knowledge that have occurred throughout their personal and professional trajectories.

Questionnaires were sent to 32 managers acting in the principal's role at schools which care for segments of Elementary and Secondary Education in the municipality, which, by providing elements for a general characterization of the group, also enabled the selection of participants for the interviews. Among the 25 respondents, we selected three managers who were early-stage (less than ten years of experience); three in their intermediate stage (between ten and 19 years); and three others, in their final stage (over 20 years), giving a total of nine managers. In each group, two women and one man were interviewed, which was a total of three males and six females.

The reflective interviews (SZYMANSKI; ALMEIDA; PRANDINI, 2011), performed by a triggering question of the narrative, were given on two occasions. The responses from which were transcribed and organized into biograms, whose structure, based on Bolivar (2002), was reorganized by Sá (2004). The biograms - made up of seven columns, each one indicating the stages, timing of the year, life age, professional age, events/critical incidents, their meanings and the representative sections of reports- consisted of instruments for a temporal organization of the narrative, which, marked by memory, show the trajectories in a coming and going movement of memories. The superposition of biograms enabled the identification of common stages that the managers go through in their professional careers and, during these stage, the main critical incidents experienced by them. Thus, we present below the main features of managers, based on the questionnaire responses, and the constituent stages of professional trajectories, based on the analysis of the biograms.

Who are the male and female headteachers?

In total, 25 managers (three men and 22 women) from 32 school units of the municipality studied answered the questionnaire: 60% were office holders (job-entry exam winners) and the others, appointed to a function by indefinite time, as a result of the removal of the holder to other jobs or administrative units. The most common form of access was by public job-entry competition, what is consistent with the results of the Principals' Profile of Public School (FUNDAÇÃO ..., 2009), in the southeast, where the city referring to the investigation is located.

Only 28% of managers indicated performance from the beginning of the teaching career, exclusively, in the public school system. Others acted as teachers in private and public institutions, simultaneously or alternately, because of the flexible hours, which facilitated the accumulation of activities. However, as managers, they started to act exclusively with dedication to the state system, under conditions of 40 working hours per week; only one of the managers was still working in private schools, totaling 64 hours per week.

The majority of the managers - 14 of the 25 - were over 50 years of age and 21 of them had over 20 years experience as teachers, showing that, personally and professionally, they had more experience. This is also due to the fact that all began their professional life by teaching, a management access condition, because it is in the context of public education, of a career. Among the elderly, there was the exception of those who attended the old Magisterium (training to high school level) and began teaching early grades, which was before the changes introduced by the current LDB (BRASIL, 1996). Except in such cases, the arrival to the function / to the position of school principal requires a graduation degree, from which it gives entry into the teaching and certification in the Faculty of Education, which explains why there are no managers from younger age groups.

Of the 25 respondents, 12 managers entered the function between 36 and 45 years of age. The men who entered earlier, both in relation to their chronological age (years of life) and with respect to their professional age (years in teaching): were under 35 years of age - one of them entered the function with only one year of teaching experience and two, with seven years. Among the participants, only three women started the new performance area, but who were already at an older age, both chronologically and professionally - a time when the children, who were all grown, demanded less attention. Souza (2003), however, states that the difference in age and years of experience between men and women indicates a present movement in female occupations such as in nursing and education areas, in which men, more than women, are quickly promoted to superior positions.

In the training of managers, three basic routes were observed in the group: a) those who attended to the old Magisterium, at high school level, Pedagogy; b) those who attended to more than one graduation and Pedagogy; c) those who attended to Pedagogy and another graduation. This last group was the majority.

With respect to continuing education, there was greater participation in additional courses offered by Seesp than the personal investment by managers in specialization courses, at a rate of 96% to 68%, which is also consistent with the Principals' Profile of the Public Schools (FUNDAÇÃO ..., 2009). Among the managers who invest in training by their own initiative, 44% did theirs in the management area. The autonomous professional development is a simpler professional development mode, in which "teachers decide to learn for themselves knowledge or skills they consider necessary for their professional or personal development" (MARCELO, 1999, p. 150). For the author, teachers opt for this type of training when they realize the lack of offers for continuing education or when they consider that such offers do not meet their needs.

The initial training area of management focuses more on Languages and Codes. It is a trend for national training, considering that the MEC (BRASIL, 2007) shows that, in elementary schools, the percentage of teachers is divided as follows:

Portuguese (17.3%), Mathematics (15.8%), Science (13.2%), History (12.4%), Geography (12.0%) and Arts / Arts Education (9.9%); in high school, the training areas with more teachers are: Arts / Literature / Portuguese (15.4%), Mathematics (11.4%), history (8.8%), Education / Educational Sciences (8.7%), Languages/Literature/Foreign Language (7.5%) and Geography (7.2%).

The responses from 25 public school managers, besides enabling the description of the main characteristics of the participants, allowed the selection of nine managers, whose narratives were collected in interviews and organized in biograms, led to the delimitation of four constituent phases of professional trajectories of the interviewees, with major critical incidents. Stage 1 refers to Basic Education; Stage 2 refers to initial vocational training; Stage 3 addresses the performance period as a teacher and continued education; Stage 4, finally, covers the role of acting manager, and continued education.

The main critical incidents in the trajectories of male and female headteachers

Stage 1: Critical incidents in basic training

In all narratives of the interviews, it was possible to observe the mention and appreciation of the individuals' first contact with school life, which is why this stage is called basic training as it covers the period referring to the grade level of basic education, formed according to the current LDB (BRASIL, 1996), Early Childhood Education, Elementary and High School Education. There are several experiences, and dealing with the similarities and diversities of these experiences lived by professionals at different career stages makes it possible to understand the collective journey of these managers (BOLIVAR, 2001). Seeking to contribute to the understanding of this route, the following are the critical incidents related to family life and related to school life during that period.

Incidents related to family life

Tardif and Raymond (2010) report, in studies of teaching activity, that "several teachers spoke of childhood origin of their passion and their choice for the teacher craft" (TARDIF; RAYMOND, 2010, p. 75). Among the managers interviewed, on the one hand, some referred to a family member as being fundamental to their basic training and even for their further professional choice, other managers, on the other hand, reported the absence of such support, maybe because of the low educational level of their parents or the lack of education value given by these individuals. In this case, they referred to other family members as being critical and influential people in their school life.

The trajectories of the starters, the two situations were reality. Camila, for example, recalled that her mother did not want to study, "*Her Grandfather, since she was seven years old, put her to work in the rice farm [...], but for her mother, the children had to study [...] [and] today, she is happy to have graduated children.*" Carlos, in turn, "*came to school because I had to come.*" And he recalled, "*I failed the 4th grade, I failed the 5th [...] grade, and my brothers all stopped in the 5th grade.*" Carolina recalled the strong role-model represented by her older sister, "*who*

studied Languages. [She was] always the one who accompanied me at school, who went to parent's meetings, who took me to school. So [...] she was a kind of a mirror for me."

The managers of the intermediate stage also expressed different experiences with respect to family life. Glaucia recounted: *"At home, I had an uncle who was a little older [...] a year or two. I [...] took his notebooks and copied everything [...]. I learned to write as well. My mother had little education, and then he started to help me, because he saw that I wanted to."* Gilson's intonation while relating: *"My father was a principal, my mother was a teacher, my grandmother was a teacher"* expressed pride regarding their influence on his school life. Geisa also expressed pride: *"Ah, yes ... Dad ... My father was an agronomist, [...] studied agronomy at a public university and he was a researcher [...]. Mom was a teacher, she always worked. [...] My brothers and I grew up in that environment. So, this is [...] extremely strong for me."*

Among the headteachers of their late career stage, Erica said, *"My father always said that we had to study. And I studied ..."*. For Estela and Eurico, the incentive was even greater. She reported: *"They helped me a lot [...] studying [...] and looked for a teacher who knew how to help me."* Eurico, in turn, said: *"There was a neighbor of mine who was a school principal, and his wife was a teacher. And my first teacher was my neighbor as well. Do you understand?"*

Therefore, the support and appreciation of family or close people with respect to training and school life were nominated by headteachers, in general, as critical incidents that positively marked their appreciation for studying, and later, for choosing the Magisterium.

School life: key events

For Setton (2005), the family and the school do not only influence the acquisition of useful knowledge but they also have a strong influence on the personality of individuals. For Tardif and Raymond (2000), the teacher, "to evoke desirable or undesirable qualities that embody or want to avoid [...] will remember the remarkable personality of a fifth grade teacher [or] the personal injustice experienced during kindergarten [...]" (TARDIF; RAYMOND, 2000, p. 216).

Carolina, one of beginner teachers, recalled that she had good teachers. She said: *"In the early grades, I had a teacher who was really cool [...], [and] I have always been a good student."* Carlos, who during childhood did not have family support for studying, recalled: *"I was starting to wake up in high school, when I had teachers who guided me, [...] [as] a Portuguese teacher". "At home, there were many children,"* said Carolina, who used a sister as a reference: *"My mother wanted me to go, but ... [...], on the first day of school, [...] I was alone. [...] I almost cried, because I did not know, I did not know where I was going, but I went [...]"*.

Glaucia, one of the headteachers in the intermediate stage of her career, said, on the one hand: *"I went straight into first grade, when I was eight years old. That, to me, was a trauma!"* On the other, she recalled with pride: *"At the end of the year, I was [elected] the best student in the class! Until now I remember that [the teacher] gave me [one] kit [school]. Wow! That, to me, was marvelous."* Today, as a headteacher, Glaucia remembered these facts and also a math teacher who *"had a totally*

unsuitable didactic.” This experience made her reflect on the current practice of teachers, claiming not to want the students to her school to have a similar experience.

Geisa recalled the good times *“at school here in the city. [...] My father, [who] died at the age of 91, studied at this school [...], until today it is runs by nuns. It was a happy time [...] in my life, [...] good teachers, good teaching”*. And for Gilson, the image of the *“public official, who in his student days, was seen [as] an example,”* made him consider that *“the school principal is also an example for how one should dress, speak, analyze and judge.”* As a school principal, he points out that these values are present, especially when it comes to the attitude of the teachers with whom he works.

Erica, at the end of her career, was delighted with this stage of school life: *“Wow, what a party, it was ... I always liked it ... I was always the classroom representative ... This I remember very well.”* Estela, who never went to kindergarten and went straight into the first grade, remembered: *“I wanted to study, but I did not want to stay at school. For this reason, nowadays, I have this different perspective ... The child who cries, I follow ... I talk to... So the child can feel comfortable.”* For Eurico, his interest in school administration dates back to his youth: *“I was part of the Civic Center [...] I remember to this day: I was a kid, [...] ten, 12 years old ... The [...] school inspector saw me working at the Civic Center [...] and said, ‘You have got the look [...] to be a principal, to work with people who administer.”*

When Glauca, Estela and Gilson reported that some of their postures, in the view of everyday life for their work, were adopted as a contrary response to what they experienced, in a way they exemplified what Marcelo (2009) says regarding the influence that teaching career professionals receive over the observation period to which they are exposed as students. Therefore they considered the effect of these experiences for their establishment in professional management, since the human identity, built in childhood and rebuilt throughout life, suffers, concomitantly with interference from both the others judgments, as from the own guidelines and individual settings, being a socialization product (DUBAR, 2005).

Thus, what are the events that marked the definitive choice for teaching and the initial training of headteachers?

Stage 2: the choice of teaching and the initial training

The option for teaching was associated with different events in the early trajectories of training, regardless of career stage and chronological age, which today characterizes these headteachers. The family influence, the lack of career options for women and the search for the use of previous studies were added to the intention of being a teacher and to the financial return provided by this career. The extracts from narratives of headteachers are exemplary to remember the events that define their choice and initial training; these are here defined by the chosen course for the teaching qualification.

Carolina, a beginner, opted for Degree in Languages because of her admiration of the work of her sister and also because she was fond of literature, *“seeing my sister working in the area [...], I was sure I really wanted to [...]teach.”* Camila, who never mentioned being attracted to the Magisterium course, said: *“Actually, I think it was a dream of my mother. In the city, there was no choice: just between Magisterium*

or Administration. And in my opinion, what would women administer?”. Carlos did not think about being a teacher:

So I entered the Engineering course and stayed for three years, [but] [...] in the first year, I was invited to be a substitute teacher. [...] I felt the need to do this, and for three months I taught mathematics. I saw that, in fact, that this was what I wanted to do. In the third year, I decided to transfer to the Mathematics course [...]. I was doing something I liked and ... With a financial return.

Glauca (in her intermediate management stage), whose only reference with regard to teaching was the negative performance of some teachers, said that “*she did not want to hear about*” the Magisterium, but she followed the idea of her colleagues, even without knowing exactly what it was about: “*When I came in, it was in the dark. I am going to do it, but what is Pedagogy? I entered, I knew the course, knew the school environment, knew the classroom and realized that my relationship with the students was good. Then I ended up staying and enjoying it.*” Geisa, in turn, studied Biology with the intention of pursuing a career in research; however, when she tried to work in a lab, she noticed: “*Wow, this is not me, [...] I am a person who relates with people. So I chose to teach.*”

Gilson attended a Degree and Bachelor in Biology and also he did not think of teaching in basic education. He joined a graduation course, but he lost the scholarship because of a change in the course, he had to return to his home city and opted to teach only for placement purposes. He said: “*I always liked it [teaching], too*”.

Erica was one of the most experienced headteachers: “*I’m almost 60 years old ... So 48 years ago, the Magisterium’s career was still attractive, right?*”. Still, after completing the Magisterium, she chose not to work immediately, because during the course, she married and had two children. She decided to take care of family life and not to start her career. Estela, who had, during childhood, the support of her family and a teacher to overcome the initial difficulties, chose the Magisterium, pointing out: “*I studied in public schools and had good teachers. I think this encouraged me to want to follow the Magisterium* “. Eurico reported: “*I think that since I was very young, I had an inclination for teaching [...]. I found the Magisterium course and met a number of people working in this area. And, this affected me, encouraged me.*”

Thus, in general, headteachers who started their careers with the initial training course of the Magisterium, they did it prematurely, considering that this type of training was held at secondary school level and, therefore, did it at around 17, 18 years of age. On the one hand, this choice had, in most cases, the direct influence of family and social context as determining factors, which brought gender issues in the women’s cases.

On the other hand, opposite to what is proposed in many discourses, a person’s destiny is not linked solely to the different aspects of his/her personality, but it also depends on the moment and the socio-cultural, historical, political, economic or educational context where he/she was inserted from birth, and these are key factors in this choice and in the professional career (VALLE, 2006).

The choice of teaching as a profession and initial training was followed by a period of teaching practice and continued education, which is understood as “an ongoing

process of building a qualified teaching practice and affirming identity, professionalism and teacher professionalization “(BRASIL, 2006, p. 15).

Stage 3: teaching practice and continued education

During Stage 3, the teachers indicated significant events or critical incidents that were associated to the experiences of teaching activities, which are related, and at the same time, differ from those relating to continued education, which is why they are described and analyzed here, considering these two dimensions.

Critical incidents in teaching performance

Despite the different reasons that have marked the option for teaching and initial training, the beginning of management experience put the principals in similar environments, with approximate challenges, considering the temporal and conjunctural differences.

Among the beginners, Carolina points to the significance of learning. During her trajectory, she developed good relationships with school staff and she was inspired by other more experienced teachers, who had a differentiated didactic, which allowed her to develop her activities with more quality. The companion-type relationship started a legitimate training process, which also covered lessons learned regarding the assimilation of routines and work practices, rules and values of the institution and the importance of these elements to her peers (TARDIF; RAYMOND, 2000). As a teacher, Camila also pointed to a sense of satisfaction both regarding the support from her peers and by the recognition of her superiors. She recalls: *“Where [...] passed, the work was recognized [...]. In the second school I went to, I had 39 students in class, [but there were] [...] [teachers] effectively with 29. [...] I questioned this difference, the principal at this school said ‘from those with 29, 15 will pass, and from your 39, I am sure 36 will pass.’”* This recognition for her effort, dedication and enthusiasm constituted an important event in her history, responding to the statement by Bolívar (2006 cited MARCELO, 2009) that “the expectations, realities, stereotypes and working conditions contribute to the configuration of the self, the self-esteem and the own social image “(BOLIVAR, 2006 cited MARCELO, 2009, p. 20). Carlos, in turn, reported that his beginning was marked by many difficulties regarding the content of the classes, which showed the fragility of his studies. Even then, he enjoyed what he was doing, pointing the professional and financial issue as outstanding: *“It happened in ‘99, when I started. It was remarkable.”*

Among the intermediate stage teachers, Gláucia, who at first had chosen the profession by chance, realized her ability to deal with students also began to develop a liking for the profession: *“It was a very complicated situation. And I acquired a good feeling. I saw that my relationship with elementary and high school students was good, I always dealt with them very well.”* Thus, with just the Pedagogy training, she decided to start a degree. She affirmed the difficulties to get classes: *“I finished Languages. [...] I passed the admission test and joined in 2000. Now, I continue, because [...] the option is there.”* Usually, the initial stage teachers training cannot change structurally from their previous beliefs on teaching, due to its

existence since the early stage in their teaching activities, especially in the context of urgency and intense adaptation, "there are the same beliefs and ways of doing that reemerge to solve their professional problems" (TARDIF; RAYMOND, 2000, p 217). Thus, Glaucia, despite teaching not being her initial choice, when she engages in teaching, she ended up identifying with the profession. She said: "It was lovely, just lovely [...], it was a challenge for me, I liked it a lot, I like high school students - they are more curious students." Also, for her, living with more experienced professionals was the key to making a definite choice of profession, especially because of two principals who encouraged her to compete for coordinating education, her career subsequently began as a headteacher.

For Gilson, another of the intermediate stageteachers, the years spent in teaching (even when teaching at five schools concomitantly) represented a phase of extreme tranquility and satisfaction, saying at one point during the interview, that the memory of the teaching brought him more satisfaction than management.

Estela, an experienced teacher, started teaching as a casual teacher in the early grades of elementary at the age of 24, she already had three children, under the care of a friend. She interrupted her professional life to help a sister in a kindergarten school opened by her father. The lack of a financial return made her to return to the public school career, the experience of "*opening her mind, because it is a mind opening process.*" Leaving a lifetime spent in a narrow world, in which she was dependent on her husband, for a paid job, is not regarded as more important than the actual sense of freedom, besides the opportunity to establish a new circle of friends and to have the support of work colleagues. During her seven years spent teaching she also received encouragement from a principal to undertake studies necessary for her career progression, what was fundamental to her developing professional knowledge, which, according to Tardif and Raymond (2010), "is temporary in the sense that the first years of work experience are decisive in the acquisition of work routines, that is, the structuring of professional practice" (Tardif; RAYMOND, 2010, p 261.).

For Eurico, another teacher in his late career years, teaching began during the Magisterium internship, where he lived with two experienced and strict principals. One encouraged him to pursue a career and the other provided him with an opportunity to begin a management role, which was a goal of his professional career. This director represents the main critical incident in his management career, which was his goal from the start of his teaching experience.

Several experiences of teachers during the period, in which they dedicated themselves to teaching, defined this option and the course of professional careers in school management, which has also been defined by the training processes experienced by the teachers over the management operations, which is influenced by continued education.

Marks of continued education

Carolina, today a beginner stage headteacher who did not think about being a school principal, studied Pedagogy because she identified a lot with teaching and said that the course offered more support in the pedagogical scope than the administrative one. She said, "*Pedagogy in its current form is excellent for a coordinator,*

[...] but for a director, I think ... It's ... it lacked a bit. We cannot imagine how to perform accounting or even write the minutes from the Council". Camila, another beginner stage headteacher, who attended the Magisterium course and spent many years in teaching, graduated in Art by requirement of the LDB that made it mandatory training in higher education for teachers who only graduated high school. Then, she studied Pedagogy to continue the career. However, she did not refer to the contributions of this course to her practice. Carlos, also a beginner stage principal, said his practice was more significant than the Faculty of Education, he took it in distance without the minimum rigor. He says: "I went twice to college and completed Pedagogy! I learned nothing [...], Pedagogy, in fact, only gave me a career advancement".

Glaucia, an Intermediate stage headteacher attributes the methodological character of the Faculty of Education (the first she attended after high school) to the contribution of the organization and systematization of her own study methodology. She reports that the course helped her prepare lessons and act as a coordinator, but, according to her: "pedagogy itself – the subjects studied - did not contribute to my role today." Thus, contact with the school environment during her internship defined her option for teaching, but not the in her search for management. Gilson, other intermediary stage headteacher, said the course was developed "still within that administrative approach, and not with today's approach of a manager." Geisa, also a headteacher in her intermediate stage, studied Pedagogy as she acted as a coordinator, referring to the course as a good period of learning, especially as she was acting as a coordinator, which is also a management function. She said "the course was more pedagogical than administrative, and the disciplines, the modules [...] were more related towards teaching practices. I did all the administrative parts, but it was more educational."

The same way for beginners and intermediates, the Pedagogy course for managers in the final stages of their careers also did not contribute towards management. Erica, for example, states that it made for functional evolution and improvement of earnings. For her, already married and with children, studying in another city represented freedom and fulfillment, which was abandoned in her youth, due to an early wedding and the arrival of children. She said the partially distant course extended her view of the world, helped her understand the political and social changes that permeated her practice. However, she questioned: "It was a very general thing, I think, in the pedagogical part, it was even better, because it opens your mind to teaching". Eurico, another experienced stage headteacher, started the Pedagogy course as soon as he finished the Magisterium and recalled the good teachers, from whom he learned a lot, despite the "very theoretical view of management that does not respond to the needs of a day-to-day manager." Estela also reported that the course's contribution to her practice was quite irrelevant, with a wider basis in the educational field: "I had a good course, [...] but, with respect to the administration, I did not have much training [...]. What helped me was the everyday practice. I left with a much better basis for the classroom than for administration."

In short, the significance of continued education (and at the same time, basic for management) - the Pedagogy course - seems not to have been very relevant for the principals' practice, regardless of the era in which the course was conducted.

in alignment with these results, a study by Gatti (2009), an analysis of educational projects of 71 Pedagogy courses, showed a prevalence of the theoretical aspects over the practical ones. The managers (whether they were in the initial, intermediate or final stages of their careers) indicated that the Pedagogy course did little for their development in a management function, and, with respect to this question, it is important that these managers did not disregard the course, but they indicated that the courses did not prepare them for performing management activities. It should be noted, in this sense, that Erica's report, which, despite her stating that the Pedagogy course expanded her view of the world, referred to it as very generic and not very focused on management skills.

However, if the Pedagogy course, according to these school principals, did not prepare them for management, how did they enter into this professional role?

Phase 4: performance in management and continued education

The management experience portrayed here covers coordination, vice direction and direction functions. Then, despite the subjects being school principals, it was considered that their choice for acting in school management started from the moment they began their activities, even in pedagogical coordination, which, despite often being considered simply an auxiliary role, between peers, among the principals and vice-principals, it "plays a key role in the management of school processes, especially in teacher training" (PLACCO; SOUZA; ALMEIDA, 2012, p 758.).

Furthermore, would the beginnings be distinct for beginner, intermediate and for more experienced headteachers?

Beginner headteachers: significant events in early management

Carolina belongs to the younger generation; she worked with the coordination of activities in the current ways, in which the teacher entirely leaves her own journey or working hours to perform this function. Her entry was given by her own initiative. She was approved in the selection process, she took the new job, which involved identifying and seeking to offer colleagues with opportunities for exchange experiences. This was because she believed that learning with peers was significant as she had experienced such a moment during her teaching process:

Working as a director happened by chance because [...] I worked as coordinator, and the principal retired. Hence [...] the principal invited me to stay in the designated vice-director position. Despite the appointment and remuneration being the same as a vice-principal, the duties and responsibilities were also consistent with those of a principal.

Unlike the choice to be a coordinator, being a director, for Carolina, was a challenge which she had not thought about before being officially invited. The headteacher expressed satisfaction both by the fact Carolina could identify herself with the job and recognized her as a leader with whom the role could be trusted.

Camila also took over role of coordinator at a school in the state system by invitation, but for reasons different from Carolina's. After many years of teaching, there was discrediting situation in public schools where she had worked for many years,

this led her to leave the role in the municipality and move away from teaching in the state to take on, in this instance, the role of coordinator at a school:

It got to the point that I did not see any growth and I did not want to be a coordinator there. I did not see any perspective: each mayor passed through, and there was no improvement at all: each time teaching was getting worse. And there was no support for teachers. Coordinators, for fear of losing the position, obeyed the orders [...]. When I was invited to become a coordinator, my husband said, 'It's just a year. You will throw away ten years of effective work because of one year? Are you sure?'. I said, 'Absolutely'. And at no time have I regretted it

Then, Camila had her expertise recognized and was invited to perform the role of vice principal, and later assumed the leadership when the principal was away, *"I was called to assume the role of vice principal, by appointment of a supervisor who had been the principal of School M, where I was a coordinator. I am at the same school, and today, I report to the principal, because of the distance of the titular director."*

Carlos, after seven years of teaching experience, decided to participate in the selection process for pedagogical coordinator, assuming the role in different schools for three consecutive years: *"I saw that the school management needed someone who had that strength of will I have, to fight, to fight for the best. And I saw a lot of people were accommodated. So, I saw that I could make a difference."*

Headteachers in the intermediate stage: critical career incidents

Glauca did not have any interest in performing any management functions before an opportunity to do so arose:

I joined the coordination, because there was no one in the role and there were no candidates. Then, everyone said: 'Go, do your application'. I went with the intention of staying only one semester and I ended up [...] [but] I was worried: 'I did not think I had the profile [...] I do not want to confront anyone'. I was never like this, 'I left the room [classes] because I want to be a coordinator because I will take the admission test for director ...'. No, I was always like this: 'the opportunity appeared, I will do it [...]'. Eventually I decided to take, at the time, the vice principal position, so that nobody from outside could assume and interfere with the work that had already started.

This reflected in that she took over the vice-principal role by appreciating the work that had been developing in the coordination function that is identified and that, even if she has left it, continued to be one of her concerns – which was the reason why she acted together with the coordinators of her team. The extroverted nature and ease of speaking to make herself heard in the educational meetings led Geisa to recognize her potential for service beyond the classroom: *"I became a titular teacher near the Greater São Paulo, and it was a very complicated thing."* Assuming the pedagogical coordination was a way that she could return to her hometown; furthermore she had the support and encouragement of two principals who also recognized her potential. After eight years of coordination, concurrently with teaching in a private school, she decided to leave coordination and return to the

classroom: *"I could not say, 'I'm not going to the meetings because I'll teach', and I could not go to the private school and say: 'I will not teach because I will attend the convocation.'" To complete her work journey, she was assigned some classes at school where she was during the time of the interview. For her, it was a decisive factor to be in school management: "The principal asked me: 'don't you want to be a school principal?'. I said I wanted to be and had spent eight years in coordination. And at that time I had already done a complementation in Pedagogy."* Then, the substitution periods began, due to the principal's license, who was looking forward to his retirement. A year later she was appointed as vice principal and, after four years, she took over that school. During her period as vice principal, she was highly valued by the titular principal, who influenced many of her current practices. She also received recognition from her peers, as well as by the regional leader.

Gilson stayed in coordination for one year, a fact which, in his report, he did not attribute great significance. His appointment as vice principal and, then the substitution by the principal function, occurred because of opportunities created by his principal, who had family ties. He did not mention his interest in the management area, he assumed such functions only because the opportunity arose and because he had the requirements for this: *"I wanted to, because I had done Pedagogy ... And there, when the opportunity arose, I accepted it."*

Managers in the final period of their career: memories of other times

Erica, with four years of teaching experience, took over the coordination of the Basic Cycle of the school in which she worked. The nature of this coordination was different from the present, with it being performed over a four hour period with the obligation to fulfill a teacher's timetable in reverse period. In practice, this coordination assumed the role of an auxiliary teacher more than, currently, the teacher trainer's role. At no time did she claim to have been willing to perform such a role, reporting it as a natural occurrence in her journey:

Never in my life did I think I would enter this area. Even when I was a coordinator ... I did not want to do it, anyway. I was a coordinator before college [...]. I did not care for the principal role, you know? The principal by itself, no. I do not remember I had thought like that ... if I really wanted the position ... I think it was happening in my life ... It was going on.

However, she remembered establishing very significant ties to the principals with whom she worked, being recognized by all of them, since these people had struggled to keep her in the role. One supported her to take over the direction of another school unit, where she stayed for only two months, returning to the original school unit after being invited by the principal who called her again to be vice principal again: *"In my view, my mistake was this. I went to this school. And ... Two months and a little later, the school principal X was asking to me if I wanted to return as the vice principal. So, I came back, I did not go forward [...]"*. She reported that the final choice was made by taking the admission test for the position of school principal. Regarding motivation, she said that it was the fact that she had been performing the management functions for some time. Despite this recognition, the decision to go back to the vice principal function was perceived as a step backwards in her career.

At first, Estela's wanted to be a teacher, but when she was invited to practice the pedagogical coordination, she took over the function for a few years. For her, the advantage was the fact that she would have time to study for admission tests, and was encouraged by her first principal.

Then, I went to be a coordinator at another school for four years and joined the management. She was a person who helped me a lot, also in relation to the admission test. She said: 'You have to study, you are a good teacher. You have to search for what you want'. And I studied hard. Being a coordinator, at that time, one could study.

By the admission test, she reached the position of school principal.

Eurico says that, from an early age, he intended to be a school principal. In his early teens he was already part of the school's Civic Center where he was studying. His involvement in school activities and his great ability in the studies encouraged his friends to ask him for help whenever they needed it. He established a good relationship with the school principal where he did his internship, having the opportunity to do it there, the pedagogical coordination and being stimulated by it to take the admission test to become a titular teacher. Later, he took the vice principal function and only left it at when admitted as a titular principal. Along the way, he had the opportunity to work as a teaching supervisor, which he was designated for about six years at which time he could assess the role and learn a lot about the laws. He realized that he did not like the bureaucracy of the post more than the school management. For this reason, he returned to his post as principal and felt accomplished and understood that his place was there.

Final considerations

The professional careers of the interviewed headteachers proved to be characterized by several factors, beginning from their first contact with literacy. The impressions and values that members of their families attributed to formal education, as well as the favorable family circumstances or not regarding the entry and continuation in studies, seem to have had a significant influence on the headteachers in their choice of teaching.

The incursion into the literate world through entry into formal education also provided positive and negative experiences, most of time they were present in the headteachers' narratives regarding their trajectories. These teachers, when starting a professional career, were already carrying experiences with them, emotions, joys, disappointments and other feelings which, over the years, were added to the different experiences accumulated during their professional experiences. In this sense, Setton (2005) states that the "family and school education would be far from having only instrumental value, that is, being the acquisition of useful learning. They would exercise primarily an overall influence on the personality of individuals" (SETTON, 2005, p. 338).

In addition, headteachers, in order to progress in their careers, are not merely configured as administrative agents, but as teachers with their experiences, personal life and the educational performance. Thus, when performing the school role of principal, their point of view tended to widen, given the need to take on more

challenging responsibilities. According to Tardif and Raymond (2000), the professional knowledge of teachers, relating to the profession, when being plural and heterogeneous individuals, make the diverse knowledge and demonstrations of how to do and how to be emerge, which, coming from other sources, have an influence on teaching activities.

Thus, we can say that in the narratives of their management careers, teaching and management approach themselves, mix with themselves. The option for the management of teachers is marked by the political context, which, through its own legislation, defines the powers and the requirements for this function, relating to social expectations with regard to education. Access to this position in Brazil is varied, such as the election, the nomination and the admission test, the latter being the form adopted in the State of São Paulo and, consequently, in the municipality studied. This choice often occurs by chance, as some headteachers said, but it is possible to observe, for example (an observation limited by the number of teachers interviewed, demanding the expansion of the investigation), that women choose to enter management later than men, and do so often when encouragement by their peers or superiors. Men seemed to consider management a financially important option in their careers. However, examples of successful management are indicated by women as another important incentive for their choices.

These observations become even more important for understanding teachers trajectories, which is an object of training performed by educational biographies, as described by Josso (2014), Catani (2014), Bueno (2006), among others. Research projects regarding the person and headteachers' actions, especially those with a biographical approach, have contributed to the further study in this issue and will contribute to headteachers' training, whose professional activity is essential for the quality of education in Brazil.

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NOTES

The Basic Cycle established by State Decree 21833 of December 28, 1983, was characterized by the integration of the first two grades of elementary school, composing a period in which students could develop progressive learning in relation to the acquisition of system writing and the development of cognitive skills and expression of different languages.

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