

**Article****A teacher at the beginning of her career: narratives about the tensions in her professional development****Daniela Dias dos Anjos¹, Adair Mendes Nacarato²**

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Abstract

This text aims to analyze the tensions that were marked in the professional development of a literacy teacher when entering a public-school system. Initially, some conceptions of a beginning teacher present in the literature are presented and the historical-cultural perspective is adopted as a theoretical framework, with the studies of Yves Clot and collaborators on the teaching activity, the professional gender of the teacher. The data consists of different narratives of the teacher: memorial of formation in the master's dissertation, written and oral narratives produced during her participation in the Education Observatory Program and a narrative produced specifically for research. The analysis focuses on three thematic units: entering the career; tensions between academic education and the real teaching activity; and the collective of the work. The analysis points to signs of a development marked by advances and moments of professional fulfillment, but also of setbacks and anxieties, especially when the teacher reflects on her academic background, countering her power to act with students in the literacy process. Her moments of tension stand out when she entered a peripheral school with adverse working conditions and without the support of school management, culminating in illness. The curbing of the teacher's power to act causes atrophies in the professional genre, mainly due to the absence of a work group in schools.

Keywords: Teaching working conditions, Professional development, Teaching career, Public school.

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Introduction

This text is part of a broader research,³ carried out with four teachers: two pedagogues and two math teachers, with different teaching periods, in order to understand how working conditions, contribute to the permanence (or not) in teaching and how they are determinants in the professional constitution of teachers. For this text, we selected the narratives of one of these teachers, the only one, among the four, in early career and active in the early years of elementary school, and, from her narratives in different contexts, we analyzed how her professional trajectory was being built in the face of challenges as a literacy teacher in a public school.

The focus of the text is on analyzing the trajectory of this teacher at the beginning of her career. Discussions on this topic are not recent. Many of them originated in Huberman's (2007) ideas about the professional life cycle in the 1990s. Since then, research has been produced, with the theme of the beginning of teaching or the beginning teacher. There are researchers who characterize the beginning of the teaching career as the first five years of activity. In this work we defend that it is not the time that determines whether or not it is the beginning of a career, but the teacher's search for professional stability, because within each change of work context, the trajectory restarts and there is a new beginning, often marked by tensions typical of those who are starting their careers.

The scope of the theme and the number of works produced, probably, encouraged the creation of a specific congress to discuss it: International Congress on the Teachers *Principiante y la Inducción a la Docencia*, with the protagonist of the researcher Carlos Marcelo Garcia. Its fourth edition was held in Curitiba, in 2014. Studies such as those of Papi and Martins (2010), André (2013), André et al. (2017), among others, discuss and present Brazilian research on the theme. Most point out that didactic support and public policies for welcoming beginning teachers are lacking. Among the few existing initiatives, the UFSCar Mentoring Program stands out, which, according to the Teachers' Portal⁴, "is for beginning teachers (with up to five years of professional practice) from 1st to 4th grades of elementary school who are interested in investing in their professional development".

André's study et al. (2017, p. 519, emphasis added), based on testimonies from beginning teachers, points to

(...) the importance of pedagogical, affective, cognitive support to beginning teachers, either by more experienced peers, or by school managers and coordinators. Teachers resent that, in general, they do not have the support of the direction or pedagogical coordination, feeling like "orphans" in times of doubt or difficulties in conducting classroom work.

The research carried out by us corroborates these conclusions and is supported by theoretical references related to the concrete conditions for carrying out

³ A research that is part of two projects with external funding: Productivity Researcher (CNPq) and Education Observatory Program (Capes).

⁴ Available on: <<http://www.portaldosprofessores.ufscar.br/mentoriampresentacao.jsp>>. Accessed in: April/2020.

teaching work at school; the professional collective; and the way in which the absence of this collective compromises the very professional constitution of the teachers who enter there. Furthermore, it is worth noting that the concept of the beginning teacher also deserves other perspectives, as we have noticed that, every time the teacher changes institutions or performance levels, there are new tensions and challenges. Thus, the cut for the first five years of teaching may not be configured as a typical phase of the teaching career. The teacher can act in a context with relative tranquility, but, when inserting himself in another school, with new cultures - both the school and the students' reference -, the lack of welcoming and institutional help can configure a new phase of the career, with the professional's psychological breakdown. It is a career restart, and the knowledge acquired previously will not always be sufficient for the support that the teacher needs. This will be the focus of this article, which aims to discuss the tensions experienced by a literacy teacher⁵ in their professional development, when entering a public-school system. Initially, we will expose some assumptions that support our work in the historical-cultural perspective; next, we will present the research context and the approach with narratives as a source of data production; the analysis will follow and is supported by excerpts from narratives by Mara; and, finally, we will present our considerations.

The teacher at the beginning of his career facing the concrete conditions of professional activity

The difficulties resulting from her inexperience are inherent to the beginning of any teacher's career, both in the private and public network. However, it is necessary to consider, in a special way, the impacts that the concrete conditions for carrying out work in the Brazilian public school have on beginning teachers. Some studies on the beginning of the career focus on the inexperience of the teacher, who, over the years and the acquisition of this experience, would have less difficulties (CORSI, 2002; VIEIRA, 2002), which is not always true, as it is because it is common for the difficulties experienced by teachers to be related not only to their inexperience, but also to the context of carrying out the work (ANJOS, 2006).

The forms of entry, the precarious situation of teaching in Brazil and the absence of work groups within schools, are factors of difficulties for all teachers, not just for beginners. In the last decades we have been dedicated to working with basic education teachers, with remarkable experience in the Education Observatory Program, in which we participated together with Mara, whose trajectory we analyze here. At each meeting, the teachers' testimonies were marked by these working conditions and, despite them, showed their intense commitment to the public school and the training of their students.

With regard to forms of admission, we know that the organization of public education in our country restricts schools and classrooms that can be chosen by beginners to those that the most experienced teachers have rejected (ANJOS, 2006; CERICATO, 2017; DOMINGUES, 2020; FERREIRINHO, 2005; GIOVANNI; GUARNIERI, 2014; ROMANOWSKI; OLIVER, 2013). Beginning teachers often enter education networks in contexts of high social vulnerability, having to deal with children and demands related to drug trafficking in their daily lives. In one of the schools where Mara worked, local dealers used the sports court. Violence, in its most

⁵ At the time of the research, the literacy cycle was from the 1st to the 3rd year and all teachers participating in the Education Observatory worked in this cycle.

diverse forms, is part of the teachers' professional teaching routine. Mara and many other teachers have, for years, reported the challenges of working in contexts like these (ALMEIDA; PIMENTA; FUSARI, 2019; ANJOS, 2006, 2013; DOMINGUES, 2020). In a research conducted by Anjos (2006) on the beginning of her career, one of the interviewed teachers, with over 30 years of experience, analyzed that, even after all these years, she found difficulties similar, in some aspects, to those of beginning teachers. Despite all the teaching experience he had, the difficulties brought by the concrete conditions were stronger than the inexperience of the first years of work. What is at issue, for both beginning and experienced teachers, is how to teach under concrete conditions that present themselves in the Brazilian public school (ANJOS, 2010). And how these conditions affect the constitution and professional development of teachers.

We assume that the teacher's professional development is linked to the concept of human development. By doing it so, from a historical-cultural perspective, we conceived, with Lev Vigotski, that development implies processes of transformation, "a process that simultaneously includes advances and setbacks, gains and losses and, mainly, ambiguities, discontinuities and ruptures" (OLIVEIRA et al., 2006, p. 119).

Vigotski (2000) brings the dimension of the social nature of human development, which means that, for this author, biological development itself is affected and transformed by culture and history. Human development "reflects the long process of transformation that man undergoes in nature and in itself as part of that nature. This makes man a self-made man" (PINO, 2000, p.51). Professional development, in this perspective, is still linked to the historical conditions of career development (FACCI, 2004). This, as a process and, therefore, non-linear, occurs along the trajectory of the teacher, in his relations with the other school members and community: students, peers, management and families.

For Vigotski (2000, p. 24), "through others we are constituted", that is, the other plays an essential role for our constitution, which occurs in social practices in which we appropriate the cultural universe and produce meanings for the activities developed. In the case of teaching, since the beginning of schooling, we have appropriated the ways of being a teacher and organizing teaching activities.

Assuming Vigotski's contribution, Yves Clot, in the field of labor psychology, also brings contributions to think about professional development. We highlight here the author's elaborations on the concept of activity genre, as we understand that the concept contributes to thinking about the collective dimension of the activity, which is vital to understand the professional development of teachers.

For Clot (2010), in the different fields of human activity, there are ways of doing it that become relatively stable and recognizable by workers who share the same professional activity. Ways to start or end an activity, ways to use working tools, address others, etc. Solutions that are being found by workers to perform the prescribed task. For Clot (2010, p. 121-122, emphasis added) between the prescribed and the performed activity, there is a third term, called "professional gender".

Gender is, in some way, the implicit part of the activity, which workers in a given environment know and observe, expect and recognize, appreciate or fear; what is common to them, bringing them together under real life conditions; what they know they should do, thanks to a community of presupposed evaluations, without having to re-specify the task each time it presents itself. It is like a 'password' known only to those who belong to the same social and professional horizon.

Saujat (2004), assuming the contributions of Yves Clot, states that there is a kind of teaching activity. For the author, the analysis of the activity of beginning teachers makes us realize the existence of the professional gender, precisely because these, no matter how specific they have been and have spent years as students in the school institution, when they assume the position of teacher, they perceive ways of doing that are often known only to those who practice the profession.

However, gender only remains alive, if there is a professional collective that revitalizes it, since gender, as a stock of practices and resources for action, is not static. The activity carried out, at the same time that it is inscribed in an existing history, as Mikhail Bakhtin would say, in a living chain of other actions that preceded it, also questions the genre, as the real always brings surprises. The activity is always new, as the situations are always unique and unrepeatable.

[...] nobody receives the legacy of a ready-to-use experience, instead, each one assumes a certain place in the chain of activities. More precisely, personal activity is only built on and against this current, through the appropriation of gender. But the last one, far from being an abstract system of norms, always equal to itself, finds itself absorbed in the action of a collective, torn by the living contradictions of a given means of work, to eventually return, saturated with variants and pregnant with nuances, with a stability that is always provisional. Genres are, in the end, the integral of the mistakes that their history allowed them to persist ... Having genres is something that always requires the subject to introduce something of his own. (CLOT, 2006, p.203)

When we turn our attention to teaching, we see few effective spaces for collective discussion of work. Often teachers, especially beginners, find themselves alone to deal with the challenges of the profession and end up taking on, as their own, problems that are actually collective. In this sense, professional development can be hindered, and even lead to illness. If the subject is unable to recognize himself at work, or put something of his own in it, he may become ill (CLOT; LITIM, 2008). For Clot (2010, p. 119, emphasis added), activity and creativity are closely related.

Without the recourse to these common forms of professional life, there is a disruption of individual action, a 'fall' in the power of action, as well as the vital tension of the collective, a loss of effectiveness of work and of the organization itself.

For this perspective, the collective is a fundamental instrument, which supports the work. Clot (2006) argues that the collective is different from a collection of people, and that the feeling of belonging to a working group is vital to the worker's activity and health.

These are the reflections that will support the analysis of the data of the beginning teacher and the challenges faced for the exercise of the teaching activity.

Mara writing by herself

Mara⁶, collaborator in this research, was born in a small town in the countryside of São Paulo and lived there until completing her degree in Pedagogy. While studying undergraduate, she worked as a researcher for scientific initiation and took her master's degree in Education at the same institution, when she moved to the city where the university campus is located. During her master's degree (2011 - 2012) she participated in the Education Observatory Program (Obeduc) and, in partnership with a 2nd year teacher, also a member of Obeduc, carried out her research, focusing on problem solving and practices literacy. After completing her master's degree, she was part of a second Obeduc project (2013-2015) as a literacy teacher. The group had seven teachers from the public-school literacy cycle, five graduate students and four university teachers - two of them, authors of this text. Mara was a beginner in teaching in the early years of elementary school. Although she already had seven years of experience, since she started working as a class assistant in early childhood education, the first years were marked by periods of substitution; as effective, in a regular classroom, she had only three years of teaching in elementary school.

As data for the research, two texts written by her were considered: her training memorial, which appears in her master's dissertation (defended in early 2013), and a text produced specifically for this research (writing by herself, 2015), in addition to the oral narratives in the meetings of the Obeduc group and with the researchers, authors of this text. It was the practice of teachers to produce pedagogical narratives, which were read, discussed and shared at group meetings. Mara's narratives are also considered in the analysis.

The production of narratives is taken by us as a device for self-training and research. We agree with Frauendorf et al. (2016, p. 351):

As they emerge from the record of the stories lived in daily life, the narratives can serve as a methodological device when related to the investigation process. When producing them, the author invests the researched object with meaning, adding to the scene reports that tell not only what he sees, but all the surroundings and nuances of the episode. They can also be used methodologically, when they are incorporated into other formative possibilities, allowing the narrator to interpret, analyze, structure, organize, reorganize and reflect on events.

We organized all of these narratives produced by Mara into a single, extensive account, which was sent to her, and we had her consent to use the data recorded there. For the analytical process we use excerpts from this narrative, based on the thematic units that emerged.

⁶ Mara is the pseudonym which we will refer to the teacher.

Mara: tensions between the idealized and what was done, and the concrete conditions for carrying out the work

The trajectory narrated by Mara allowed us to choose three thematic units for analysis: entering the career as an effective teacher; tensions between academic training and the real teaching activity; and the collective work. Although these units are not exclusive, we opted to separate them, aiming at the analytical process, and this required us to fragment Mara's narrative, which no longer has a chronological sequence.

Starting a career as an effective teacher

Throughout her graduation, Mara had some professional experiences, but only at the end of her master's degree could she become a teacher, in a class of her own - hence being considered a beginner teacher. Thus, she narrates her beginning in the profession:

My entry into the profession happened and still happens along with my academic background. I think that was very important for me. It is like an eternal stage. In the second semester of graduation, I got a job as a Child Education assistant in a private school [...]. At the end of this semester, the teacher in the class which I helped (kindergarten), got pregnant and left school. The school management offered me the room. I was terrified and at the time, my philosophy professor advised me to accept. I accepted it, took over the room and stayed there for 4 years. It was also there that I developed my CBT and IC research. I made less money than the other teachers, because I was not trained, but being there made a huge difference in my training. I left the school because of the Master's. I was unable to reconcile the traveling, reading and work. During the master's degree I went through some segments of education: I gave training to teachers of Early Childhood Education; I gave private lessons; I replaced elementary school teachers, I was a SARESP inspector and taught at EJA (initial years). In the last semester of the Master's Degree, I was called in the City Hall [...] competition and finally took over a regular Elementary School classroom. (Self-writing, 2015)

This excerpt provides indications of the beginning of the professional activity of most educators in this country. They take on a role as a teacher, but without due professional and economic recognition, as they have not completed graduation. We can say that it is a resource that small private schools find to have cheap labor. Such practice puts into question the very concept of teaching professionalism, showing the fragility of this concept and, as analyzed by Lüdke and Boing (2007, p. 1168), such fragility is "typical of a group whose function does not seem so specific in the eyes of society, especially in the case of elementary school teachers, to the point of leading certain adults to think that any one of them can exercise it". In the specific case of pedagogues, the idea seems to be naturalized that, in order to work in early childhood education, professional qualification is not necessary, as hiring takes place during the undergraduate period. On the other hand, the future teacher-Mara considered this professional activity a source of training, with appropriation of knowledge for the exercise of teaching practice. Many undergraduate students are subjected to these working conditions because they recognize that they will be able to open future 'doors' for them. As teachers and teacher educators in the Pedagogy

course, we continue to see undergraduate students taking on precarious contracts to work in early childhood schools, or as interns in public education networks, which corroborates other studies such as Romanowski and Oliver (2013).

Still in relation to this period, she narrates the tensions experienced:

- The pressure from the private school, which is different from the public one. The constant need to show parents "GREAT" work, even if it doesn't have much meaning for the student. That was a big hassle for me. Although the private school gives us a plethora of material resources to work with, having a reduced number of students in relation to the public, having a greater number of parents who participate in the child's school life, the teacher's freedom of work is different.
- Another issue I encountered in Private Child Education was the parents' distrust in leaving their young children with me. Many questioned me for being young, for not having children and still studying. Today, being the mother of a small child, I understand these issues better. I had to gain the parents' trust over time. (Self-writing, 2015)

Mara's testimony corroborates the results of the research by André et al. (2017, p. 511, emphasis added), regarding the relationship with the family:

The distrust of these children's parents, regarding their competence to educate their children, many of them repeatedly said the expression: "you are so young!". This affects teachers in the constitution of their teaching identity, as they feel compelled to prove to the other, that they are capable of exercising their functions, that they are fit for the position for which they are qualified.

At the conclusion of the master's degree and already married, two new facts changed Mara's trajectory: the birth of her first daughter and approval in a public contest in a metropolitan city. Thus, in 2014, she left the small living spaces and started to live in a large city. In this type of city, the new teacher always take over schools in the suburbs, some of which are difficult to access. We agree with Ferreirinho (2005, p. 12, emphasis added) that

(...) precious people are being assigned to these areas. But the precariousness of the situation in which they live and the determination to leave the post as soon as they manage to "move closer to home", makes the relationships established with the community also unsafe and unstable. The whole apparatus of rules that supports the entry and permanence of teachers in their careers is a veiled way of imposing an exclusionary school culture, or rather, of dealing with "the excluded within" the education system, as Bourdieu says.

Life became more complex for Mara: with a baby to be taken care of and the beginning of her career, in a 1st year class, with the function of teaching children from the suburbs to read and write. When reflecting on her working conditions and comparatively analyzing her small experience, she expressed herself as follows:

The tensions were and still are many ... in fact, I believe they will never end. I think they are the ones that mobilize us to seek better

working conditions, to improve our practice and to think about strategies. I went through and still go through some tensions like: The fear of not being able to cope was also a tension and still is. I went through this when I started in Early Childhood Education; I passed it again when I was in teacher training, and again when I went to EJA, and again when I started elementary school, when I changed schools, when I took a year that I never took ... I go through it every year. I think this tension is good! It makes me work more carefully. School relations also cause tension. There are many relationships, we relate with students, with other teachers, with management, with employees, with families ... they are very delicate relationships and directly interfere in our practice. Regarding the relationship with students, I believe that in addition to our "way" of being, we are building strategies to deal with conflicts with practice. (Escrita de si, 2015, emphasis added, quotation marks - by the author)

When talking about the tensions at each new school, or when taking a class for the first time, Mara gives indications of how genre works, of the unwritten rules, which indicate how to act or not to act. In general, it is often perceived that they exist when you do something that is considered out of place in a given situation. However, these tensions are instigating, as they enable new learning, and the teacher builds up her way of acting, especially with students.

Mara stayed at that school for a year. She needed to remove herself because there was a reduction in the number of classrooms in the 1st year, and one of the teachers would need to leave the school. Mara, even though she was in a probationary internship, which required three years in the same school, according to the municipal regulations, she was selected by the board to enter the removal process. In her narratives at Obeduc, she attributed this decision of the director to her constant absences, resulting from her daughter presenting some health problems that required her attention. This situation shook the teacher emotionally, because although she worked in a distant school and with some difficulties, she was teaching. In fact, in that year, she produced pedagogical narratives that presented a secure teacher in the classroom.

Thus, in 2015, it took over its activities in another school in the outskirts of the city, located around a slum, with a difficult "clientele". This school unit, in that year, became a pilot within the integral school project of the municipal network. It was a very tense year for Mara. The new student profile she took on scared her at first; and the new school project was a far cry from what she imagined would be a full-time school. Their classes were fragmented, students had many specialists throughout the week and, as a result, they did not always create bonds with the multipurpose teacher and, therefore, there was no reference for them. And, because they are without reference, the arrangements that the teacher needed to make in the classroom were constant.

Another characteristic of the teacher's work at the beginning of its career, in addition to assuming positions in peripheral schools, is linked to dealing with difficult classes, as stated by Anjos (2006, p. 90):

When entering the public school, the teachers are inserted in the existing logic: they will work in schools and classrooms that were not chosen by the teachers who are already in the network, those who have more experience, more service time. This logic indicates that the school is not organized to welcome the beginning teachers and

more than that, to welcome the students. When assigning schools or difficult classrooms to beginners, one is not thinking about a political-pedagogical proposal for students' human formation, but reproducing a logic of exclusion. Schools located in more distant regions suffer from the high turnover of teachers and the consequent lack of continuity in their work.

That was how Professor Mara was after two years of teaching as a literacy teacher: in 2014, in a school on the outskirts, but with good working conditions, and she just was no longer successful because she had experienced many family problems during the year; in the second year, in 2015, a new peripheral school, where there were so many difficulties in teaching, that she ended up on sick leave in the last three months and abandoned her participation in the Obeduc group. She needed time for herself; to reflect on her professional career. During the period she stayed at Obeduc, until August 2015, the narratives produced by Mara were marked by tensions and feelings of helplessness. The excerpt from her narrative, at the beginning of the next section, highlights her suffering process. Unable to act, the teacher became ill (CLOT; LITIM, 2008). She was unable to cope with such an adverse situation; nothing she planned to do with the students was successful; it lacked support, mainly from school management. Not even the colleagues of the Obeduc group were able to help her. The group's trainers also endeavored so that she, at least, would continue to go to meetings every two weeks, but it was very painful for her to hear the narratives of her colleagues, with signs of progress in the students' development, and to be totally impotent in the face of her work context. We haven't lost touch with Mara; she always gave us news⁷. In 2016, she took on a 3rd grade class in the same unit as her last job and was able to exercise her teaching, because, according to her, after two years in school, students are settling down and accepting the rules and limits of that context. Were the students accommodated or did Professor Mara find ways to act in adverse conditions? In 2017, after three years in the network, she was finally able to enter the removal process and choose the school that suited her, both because of the proximity of her home and because it is a smaller, non-peripheral school. The question remains: if Mara had not removed herself and returned to take on a class of 1st grade, like in 2015, would she have remained in the profession?

Tensions between academic training and the reality of teaching activity

We went back to accompany Mara in her second periphery school, in 2015. At various times, throughout this year, Mara explained in the Obeduc group her anxieties, her difficulties in dealing with the diversity of the students in her new class: a first-grade class with 32 students. So, she told us in her first narrative of the year:

The students' behavior scared me a lot at first. The games are quite violent. They usually play police and thief, but not the police and thief we know from our childhood, not the one who is practically a catch. It is a police and thief more like their reality. The police are armed with revolvers (pieces of branches) and bombs (stones) and thieves with machine guns (large pieces of branches). The police do not "catch" and "arrest", they shoot and kill. Thieves also shoot and kill.

⁷ This information was collected from Mara's conversations with the authors.

In addition to playing, students have a violent relationship with each other and with teachers, they are unable to solve any conflict by talking, they usually beat, kick, bite and curse. There is still, very naturalized, the habit of taking things from others. They take materials from colleagues, materials from my desk and, when asked, respond naturally that it was on the floor, or did not know whose it was, so they took it.

I confess that, at the beginning of the year, I felt very uncomfortable with their behavior, in fact nonconformity is the right word. She was extremely angry and gave me "Homeric" scolding, which in fact did not solve anything. I came home exhausted and frustrated for spending so much time "fighting" over things that were basic to me: respect for others, care for the material, talking and not fighting ... (Narrative Obeduc, 2015)

Until the month of April, she still had not managed to develop a pedagogical work with this group, much less work with literacy. And that was inconceivable for the teacher who, in her master's research, had discussed literacy.

In another excerpt from her first narrative, she reports:

During these two months of class, I have identified myself more and more with a reading that I usually do for my students. The book is called: My teacher is a monster! The book tells the story of a boy and her teacher, Mrs. Kirby. The boy, Beto, sees the teacher as a monster. But, when he finds the teacher outside school, Beto realizes that she is not exactly a monster, but that the everyday situations of the classroom make the teacher angry sometimes.

I love that book! But I don't like looking so much like Mrs. Kirby. I leave school every day with the feeling that my students see me exactly like that! At the beginning I suffered a lot with all this situation, but now, I decided to create a mantra and I repeat it every day when I enter the room and when I leave: "I will do the best I can, within my working conditions". This is how I have done it, and although I still feel a bit "monster", it has helped. [...] I don't like the teacher I was a month ago. I still don't really like what I am now. I still scream and shout, I still feel like a "monster" at times, but my goal has changed ... (Narrative Obeduc, 2015, emphasis added by the teacher)

Mara seemed to give us indications that she was finding her way, with the power to act. The path she found in the exercise of the practice; in the daily clash between their values and those of their students. As Arroyo (2002, p. 48) states:

For thousands of teachers, public school educators, their profession appears as a must-be with new shades, exactly in view of the painful finding that thousands of children, adolescents, young people and adults with whom they live in school are subjected to inhuman living conditions.

In those moments when she stopped to write, she reflected on what she had learned in academic life and the concrete conditions of teaching:

We learned in college some things like the importance of affection in learning, the care with what we say, the danger of touching the student, that we should not shout, that we are the "adult of

the relationship”; we hear a lot of criticism about the ways of dealing with conflicts and then you find yourself alone in a classroom, with a multitude of conflicts and realize that you sometimes do things that, in theory, you think are wrong and that worked in practice. Over time, we gather what we know and have and build our way of dealing. This year [2015], being with a group of students from a very different reality from those I already knew brought me a lot of tensions in that sense. Looking for a way to deal with conflicts in the classroom so that I could actually work was very laborious and tense. [...]

Ah! Where is literacy in all this? Stay in the spaces that are left. This is not the time for big projects, big games, big sequences of activities. We do it little by little, in the construction of routine, in the calendar, in the counting of students, in the call ... in simple activities.

My practice, when it comes to planning, is also changing. Getting organized with the time of the Integral School and with these working conditions has been a great challenge.

There is no point in wanting to read and write (either in any area), without first offering the minimum conditions so that my students can receive what I have to offer. Before I understood this, I, **the teacher, was a “monster”, I screamed and screamed desperately so that they could hear me and do what I was proposing.** It is logical that without any success, because they were not prepared for it. [...] **I have a new work tool, unusual for literacy teachers and filled with oppressive meanings that do not match my pedagogical convictions. Yes, the teacher has a whistle ... those squeaky and disciplinary.** But it was the way I found to organize some things. Before someone splits his colleague's head from meters away with a stone, he will hear a whistle. He stops and looks at me, so we can talk and solve the problem civilly. [...]

And how am I doing this? Certainly not in the beautiful and poetic way that scholars of morality, ethics and the construction of values usually write in their books. I make use of the resources that help me to make them listen to me and not kill themselves ... from there we build emotional, moral, ethical bonds ...

I always hear from some colleagues! Calm down, you are a good teacher and will do it! Before I was desperate, thinking that I should really do it. Today I don't despair, I just answer what my “mantra” made me understand. **I don't have to handle anything! I just have to do what is possible, within my working conditions.** (Obeduc narrative, 2015, emphasis added)

Mara narrates some of the lessons learned at the university: the importance of affection; be careful what we say; don't shout and etc. And, seeing herself alone in a classroom, with a multitude of conflicts, sometimes she does things that in theory she thinks are wrong and that worked in practice: being too angry, being a “monster”, having a whistle to make yourself heard ... That is, the affection and care that were so dear to her during her academic training, were now exchanged for acts and instruments of repression. And, perhaps, what generated an even greater discomfort, was the awareness of having to lower their expectations regarding the students' learning, as well as the break with the belief that the teacher has to handle everything.

Mara's statements corroborate other researches with teachers, who also reveal their anxieties, when realizing the limits of their action (ANJOS, 2006; 2013;

ANDRÉ et al. 2017). In some moments, in their narratives there is discomfort in relation to their practice and the "prescribed" by the academy. It is as if the initial training had created expectations of how she should act as a teacher, but in the daily performance of the work many of those expected were not fulfilled.

This reflection raises questions about teacher training, about the relationship between university and school and about work groups. Schools do not usually function as a learning place for the teacher. It is expected that this one arrives "ready" for the exercise of its function (FONTANA, 2000).

Initial education (graduation course), as we have seen, has failed to serve as a resource for professional practice. Mara, like so many other teachers, says she finds herself alone to face the conflicts that arise in daily work activities. And, in the search for what to do, it seems that the disciplinary resources inscribed in the history of this profession (use of whistle, shouting, teacher who "becomes a monster") have more strength than the theory studied at the university. Although she claims to agree with the theory, it does not serve as a resource at the time of the conflict.

There is also evidence of a stunted professional genre, which lacks life, as the theory seems to be detached from the concrete reality of schools, and there is no collective within the school to talk about work. Thus, the teacher finds herself alone, looking for solutions to the conflicts that arise.

Mara's anguish and suffering also affected us, as we are educators and teachers in the Pedagogy course. How are we contributing to the training of future teachers? How to make this connection between academic studies and the exercise of practice during graduation?

Working collective

In Mara's narratives, we identified how the collective of teachers emerged, sometimes as elements of constitution and advances in professional development and, at other times, as impediments to their power to act.

Upon completing her dissertation, Mara analyzed her process of becoming a researcher. According to her:

As a researcher, looking back and resuming my two-year master's degree in education allows me to understand the different roles I played in the construction of this work. Starting from a general look at the idea of research I could consider myself "the researcher", but a more careful look at the particularities of this work allows me to see that I took on different roles and, consequently, to recognize growth not only academic, but as a teacher in constitution, as a subject, as a partner. During the passage through the disciplines of the graduate program and participation of the Obeduc group, there were many moments of deconstruction and misunderstanding with myself. Feeling part of the academic environment was not a smooth process, there were moments that I felt safe with my convictions and understandings about. (Excerpt from her master's dissertation, 2013, p. 115, emphasis added)

We can say that she was in a moment of enchantment with academic life and learning since graduation. A careful reading of Mara's narratives brought us indications that it was exactly in the year 2015, given the impotence to deal with such a difficult and large group, that she began to put into question everything she had

learned in her academic training. Undoubtedly, this was Mara's greatest distress: how to teach 32 students how to read and write in such adverse conditions?

At different times, Mara tells us about her relationship with her peers and how it was not always possible to find a real working group inside schools:

This year [2015], being with a group of students from a very different reality from those I already knew brought me a lot of tensions in that sense. Looking for a way to deal with conflicts in the classroom so that I could actually work was very laborious and tense. Relations with our peers is not always smooth. Developing a practice that does not interfere in the space of the other teacher, being able to make positive and productive partnerships, being able to share your work with the other, I think it is almost an art. The relationship with the school management, for me, is one of the most delicate points and perhaps the most present at that moment for me. Having a relationship of mutual respect with the school management is a very delicate process. On one hand, I think we should consider the position of the manager, who cannot always do everything the teacher wants, for bureaucratic and legal reasons that we know are not few. But, on the other hand, we have the support and situations that escape the classroom and that the school management has the competence to solve, together with the teacher, and often this does not happen. Having a management that does not support you in extreme situations and that does not know and disqualifies your work is a great tension. Of all this, I consider that the most difficult thing is to work in a school in which the relations between teachers-teachers, teachers-managers are bad. As much as we have problems with students, when the group works in tune and the environment is good, the tensions decrease. (Self-writing, 2015, emphasis added)

Mara's words seem to corroborate Clot's (2010, p.124) idea about the importance of the relationship between peers for the development of the activity.

The work of organizing the collectives themselves, for the time allowed, is far from being encouraged as it should be, in view of the demands of the tasks. Rather, it is not uncommon for him to be discouraged in the official organization of work under the influence of varied short-term tyrannies.

Mara's trajectory and the tensions experienced in her early career are not just hers. Other studies have recorded stories of teachers who have gone through the same difficulties. Castro (2020, p.92), when referring to this, states:

I believe that when these narratives circulate in a specific social auditorium, formed by teachers and activists from a quality public school, they resonate. These teachers are faced with established practices and suffer for understanding that these practices (historically established) do not meet the real needs of all students, as they are aimed at a small group that already arrives at school with more privileged conditions. Thus, they continue to reinvent themselves, creating other ways of developing their work in order to guarantee practices that serve each and every one, and that is why they remain eager for partnerships, to walk this path of resistance together. I also believe that, in producing this resistance to the

practices already established in the school, which is an institution that is in a broader context, these teachers end up having very similar experiences and finding very similar challenges and ways of resisting, as they face the same forces who kept the school the same way.

In the specific case of Mara, the continuity of graduate studies, participation in the OBEDUC project and other actions in the search for dialogue, show this incessant search for resisting an individualistic logic, which places on the individual subject the responsibility for success or failure.

In their narratives it is possible to identify moments of uncertainty and anguish, interspersed with moments of hope. In the Obeduc group she expressed her anxieties and failures more intensely; in the narrative produced for the research, when she was still participating in Obeduc, she reported her professional trajectory, and seemed to be satisfied with her practice:

From everything I read and hear about the teacher's working conditions, I consider that I was and am privileged. Not that this is ideal. It is not! But, looking at education today, I think I have good working conditions. We have reasonable material and structure, incentive and remuneration for continuing education, a good career plan, an intern who accompanies me in working with literacy (in language and mathematics). A specific issue that today makes my job a lot easier is support and access to school management. I know it is a specific feature of the school I am in, but it is not a rule. At other times, with other administrations, in other schools - things have already been different and this can directly influence working conditions.

As I said, there is still a lot to be improved in our working conditions: too many students in the classrooms; excessive demands from outside the school, such as projects, external evaluations and celebrations that are not part of the teacher's planning and a number of other things.

The Integral School has a differential that, for me, is a great advance that is the Teaching Time of meeting between peers. This time, foreseen within the teacher's journey, is intended for planning and evaluating the work between peers. (Self-writing, 2015, emphasis added)

Mara highlights positive aspects in the organization of the education network in which she works. It is a network that has achieved some professional achievements as a result of the struggle of the educators' movement. She was arriving at this newly transformed school and, at the beginning of the year, she identified some possibilities of work shared with her peers and reflected on her own constitution. As for her own conditions for teaching work, she expressed it this way:

I am still crawling in the construction of my teaching practice. But, I do notice many changes. Looking at the first year of teaching and today, after 7 years ... I feel more secure, both in the conduct of classes and in my planning; I created strategies for dealing with conflicts in the classroom; I have more confidence in refusing to do things that I think are not necessary or not compatible with my conceptions; I am better positioned in situations of group discussions; I plan my time better

with students. I think these are some positive transformations that I believe are being built over time. (Self-writing, 2015)

In her reflections, she tried to produce meanings for everything she was experiencing, trying to look at the positive aspects, mainly of a full-time school, and the way she tried to create work strategies with her students. However, in the oral narratives in the Obeduc group, another Mara appeared: tense, anguished, helpless. She said she did not have spaces for extra-class work with students, although the school was large, but everything was very open, without control and she was afraid of not being able to hold students in the spaces she had. So, it was working as much as possible. She also narrated that the partnerships she liked so much in 2014, when she joined the network, ceased to exist; teachers in the same year did not have free time to work simultaneously; the official day was 25 hours, but all of them were committed to the students. Mara was again faced with a great challenge: how to manage to have an adequate climate of pedagogical work.

There was hope that the Obeduc group could help her succeed and regain the joy of being a literacy teacher. However, due to her change of city, she needed to travel to participate in the group meetings, which became unfeasible, as she left work around 6 pm and, often, her daughter was not in good health. Gradually she moved away from the project, leaving it entirely in August 2015. At school, she also couldn't stand it and ended up on sick leave. So, she ended that school year. It is possible to say that a certain atrophy of the collective dimension of the profession is at work here, as stated by Roger (2007, p. 31, our translation):

[...] the current atrophy of the transpersonal dimension and the lack of generic resources, allowing to face the obligations of the work to be carried out, can be translated as a deregulation of the metier's interpersonal dimensions. Professional conflicts can then become personal, intrapsychic, without solutions. In the same way, when, for lack of the collective, the metier's personal dimension and its interpersonal dimension are confused, the work becomes difficult, costly - sometimes unbearable.

But, as we already pointed out above, in 2017 she managed to move to a smaller school closer to her home and was able to start all over again ...

Final considerations

Mara's narratives, produced at different times and contexts, show her intense movement of reflection. Sometimes with certainty, sometimes with anguish. Thus, it is necessary to consider that the narratives presented here had recipients, who were not always the same: the group of Obeduc teachers - moments when she felt more comfortable to express her anxieties and insecurities - or the teacher who accompanied her since graduation: the writings addressed to her were marked with reflections from the studies carried out and, perhaps, she did not express her anxieties, for fear of explaining that she did not feel 'prepared' to face the difficulties imposed by the school environment.

The evidence in Mara's narratives corroborates other studies, some referenced in this text (ANDRÉ et al., 2017; ANJOS, 2006; PAPI; MARTINS, 2010) in reference to the beginning of her career. Among the main convergences, we highlight: taking the position in a peripheral school; taking on difficult classes; not

having the support of families or school management; and need to develop their work alone. In these conditions, the teacher, most of the time, if it manages to stay in school, is waiting for a removal so that it can go to other contexts where it thinks it has better working conditions.

Mara, like so many other teachers, after three years in peripheral schools, ended up asking for removal and went to a school closer to home, smaller and with better working conditions. We see here the continuity of a logic that has repeatedly expelled teachers from schools in the periphery. Non-existent work groups, insufficient initial and continuous training and distant from the concrete reality place the responsibility of the teacher, alone, to "cope" with the reality faced. Mara, at various times, blamed herself for failing to cope, put her academic background in check and took on repressive acts that went against what she believed to be the teacher-student relationship. At one point, it seemed to us that she became aware that the teacher cannot handle everything; however, there were so many tensions and impediments to her action that she ended up leaving the classroom on sick leave. Which, as we indicated earlier, indicates a weak professional group, which could not serve as a resource for individual activity.

With this study, we also found what other research points out: the working conditions are not always favorable and the isolation of the teacher, as well as the lack of welcome and help, by the management, to the teacher entering the schools. And here we refer to any professional who enters a new school, and not just the one at the beginning of its career, corroborating our initial assumptions that, every time the teacher changes school units, there is a new beginning. The knowledge it has already accumulated about teaching practice is not always sufficient to face the new challenges, as each school, as a field of human activity, has specificities and solutions that are being unveiled by the professionals who work there. As André et al. (2017) points out, the teacher is affected by the work environments and it needs support and reception.

Some studies, such as those by Papi and Martins (2010), claim public policies aimed at the beginning teacher. The training institutions need to have programs for monitoring graduates of undergraduate courses, so that the beginning teacher has the academic and personal support to face the difficulties posed mainly by working conditions; in addition to this, education networks need to have continuing education programs that listen to teachers, in order to build alternatives to help them in partnership work. In addition, schools need to have another organization, giving teachers conditions for mutual help and for the constitution of a working group, which is more than a collection of people and, in fact, acts effectively to revitalize the professional genre.

At the end of the analysis of Mara's narratives, we, researchers and trainers, were also affected and crossed by feelings of helplessness, because we were unable to help her in the moments of her anxieties; we also reflect, by rethinking our role as teachers who work in a Pedagogy course and in continuing education projects.

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Sent on: April/20/2020 | Approved on: June/10/2020