

## Artigo

# From the past to the future of the training of Educators/Teachers: the present poses new challenges

## Del pasado al futuro de la formación de educadores/profesores: el presente plantea nuevos desafíos

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### Abstract

Becoming an educator/teacher is an individual and, at the same time, collective process, which requires the internal symbiosis of action, experience and emotion, in the sense of constituting a total action of a person in the performance of a specific profession. This paper is based on an approach to the basic principles of teacher training and the analysis of training experiences in which the teacher deals with a combination of logics, situations, professional attitudes, ways of being and dealing with which they position themselves. , makes choices, traces paths. Next, the focus is on the analysis of current affairs, seeking to uncover existing problems and potentialities, and opening up challenges to this challenge of training educators and teachers for a future, which we now know better is uncertain, but in which the guarantee must remain of education as a right of children, prevented and promoted by their educators and teachers. Concepts such as experience, personal interaction, reflection, specific knowledge, professional learning are fundamental to the structure of this text. Written in times of pandemic, a period during which it was necessary to re-conceptualize many dimensions of training, the text highlights some learning that this troubled period provided, highlighting the statement that the training of educators/teachers is founded as a co-construction of free, responsible, autonomous and supportive citizens.

### Resumen

Convertirse en educador/docente es un proceso individual y, al mismo tiempo, colectivo, que requiere la simbiosis interna de acción, experiencia y emoción, en el sentido de constituir una acción total de una persona en el desempeño de una profesión específica. Este texto se basa en una aproximación a los principios básicos de la formación docente y el análisis de experiencias de formación en las que el docente se enfrenta a un conjunto de lógicas, situaciones, actitudes profesionales, formas de ser y de afrontar en las que se posiciona, toma decisiones. , traza caminos. A continuación, nos centramos en el análisis de la actualidad, buscando develar los problemas y potencialidades existentes, y abriendo desafíos a este desafío de formar educadores y docentes para un futuro, que ahora sabemos mejor que es incierto, pero en el que la garantía debe

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permanecer. de la educación como un derecho de los niños, impedido y promovido por sus educadores y docentes. Conceptos como experiencia, interacción personal, reflexión, especificidad, aprendizaje profesional son fundamentales para la estructura de este texto. Escrito en tiempos de pandemia, período durante el cual fue necesario reconceptualizar muchas dimensiones de la formación, el texto destaca algunos aprendizajes que proporcionó este período convulso, resaltando la afirmación de que la formación de educadores/docentes se fundamenta en una co-construcción de ciudadanos libres, responsables, autónomos y solidarios.

Keywords: Initial teacher training, Educator/teacher, Experience

Palabras clave: Formación inicial de docentes, Educador/profesor, Experiencia

## 1. Introduction

This text is founded on an approach to the basic conceptions and principles of teacher training that we strive for - conceptions of society, of education and school, of vision of pupils/children and young people, of agency, of experience, and of role of teachers in the present and in the future - to focus on an analysis of the actuality. From this, we seek to unveil issues, such as the coexistence of different training conceptions, which sometimes have difficulty dialoguing with each other, the pressures on the training teachers that are incongruous with the training action (created by the excess of bureaucratic processes that overwhelm them, by the demands posed by a performance assessment that disproportionately devalues the pedagogical component, by the increment of classes because teachers are not replaced, by work overload, among others). In counterpoint, new potentials arise as research progresses, with increasing opportunities for a demand for educators and basic education teachers, and with new challenges to the desideratum of training professionals for a future, which we now know to be uncertain, but which has to be able to guarantee the effectiveness of education as a right of the children. Finally, some topics on training in times of pandemic will be highlighted, along with the lessons that were learned.

## 2. Reference principles for training

Teacher training is intrinsically linked to the conceptions of society, to the vision of pupils/children and young people, of education and of school, as well as to what we think about the role of teachers in the present and in the future, knowing that, as Nóvoa argues, “It is not possible to train teachers without being open to society, without a knowledge of the diversity of cultural realities that define contemporary education” (2017, p. 1117).

Currently, in a plural school, characterized by cultural diversity, by the multiplicity of modes of interaction and social action, in the face of a present and of a future laden with uncertainties, teachers cannot be reduced to a mere social role previously programmed, working according to a single logic determined by

others. The complexity of today's society, of schools as organizations, and of teaching action in a world of uncertainty, requires teachers with their own identity, with authenticity, capable of being the authors of their own lives, who are able to work collaboratively with professional peers and with communities, believing that, subscribing to Nóvoa's statement, "it is not possible to train teachers without the presence of other teachers and without the experience of institutions" (2017, p. 1122). Teacher training is a vocational preparation; the relationship between training and profession is biunivocal, that is, one cannot ignore the importance of the profession for the training or of the training for the profession, which requires collaborative processes between the different actors in the training process (trainees, teachers of training institutions and teachers of primary and secondary schools, in a constructive interaction with children and communities).

Experience, in the sense of attributing effective meanings to lived experiences, is a fundamental pillar in the process of professionalization. Dubet understands experience as fundamental to give meaning to social practices, defining this concept as "individual and collective behaviors dominated by the heterogeneity of its constitutive principles and by the activity of individuals who must build the meaning of their practices in the bulge of this heterogeneity" (1994, p. 15). This author disassembles this concept into three traits, which allow us to expand this study:

1. Heterogeneity of cultural principles – the social identity (in this case, of the trainee who is preparing him/herself for the teaching profession) is constituted by his/her life history, by his/her expectations, by his/her study, his/her doing, his/her experience. That is, the determinant *his/her* means that the social role of teaching is constructed by the subject in contexts of specific formation;
2. Subjective distance of individuals (trainees) from the system (school education) – in the training process, particularly in the situation of internship, the trainee deals with different logics of action, feeling the need to explain to himself how he/she builds his/her practices by reference to the set of values and knowledge of a professional field;
3. Construction of the collective experience – the construction of autonomous teachers, integrated in a collective of which they are a component, enables a participatory and dynamic performance of professional construction.

That is, in their training experiences, the subjects deal with a combination of logics, of situations, of professional postures, of ways of being and of acting, according to which they take a stand, make choices, chose paths, thus promoting their process of constitution of their own identity. Social experience is the activity that allows every person to build an action whose meaning and coherence are no longer given by a homogeneous system and by unique values (Dubet, 1994). The young people being trained are, according to the perspective that we advocate, critical agents, whose subjectivation, understood as *the subjects' logic* (Dubet, 1994), is present in the actions they develop in their future of being teachers, hence the training process needs to consider who are the people that decided to access the training, how their life histories and expectations can be mobilized in a process of *constitution of themselves* (Delory-Momberger, 2008, 2019) as teaching professionals.

Experience, as Momberger so well explains, is at the heart of the processes according to which we build the biograph of situations and events of our existence, give them a shape and a meaning (2019, p. 81).<sup>2</sup> The author explains this concept by pointing out its three premises: 1. experience is what happens to someone and the way that subject subjectively experiences what happens at the core of his life; 2. the experiential process is that of an implicit or explicit elaboration of a cumulative and integrative construction, involving the learning and development of new resources; 3. experience consists of a set of knowledge, learning and skills associated with the exercise of an art or craft - the 'exercise of living' - a set that is in permanent re-composition and evolution. The researcher reinforces the conception of the construction of the / from experience, but that only gains importance in the professionalizing field, because elaborated in the interaction with the *other*:

Experience is always what I have as an instance of my being in composition and cannot be assimilated or identified with any other as such; but experience is also always built and rebuilt, composed and recomposed, according to the multiple and cumulative configurations of which my existence (my existing) is woven in its interactions with the world and with others<sup>3</sup> (Momberger, 2019, p. 85).

That is, within this focus, the value that each trainee experiences and to which he/she gives a shape is highlighted, one which he/she subjectively appropriates by being wholly immerse in these situations, by his/her relationship with others (children/students, advisors, supervisor, community), with the specific learning of the profession, with a pedagogical intentionality that is clarified, strengthened, reconfigured and reconstructed over time. The experience of internship, central in these courses, is not something external to the individual, it is not an 'object' that the trainee finds in his/her way, but something that happens within the subject, to which each trainee, in the intersubjectivities that he/she realizes in context, attributes its own form.

The teaching profession has an absolutely central relational basis, in which everyone is absolutely implicated, that is, as Nóvoa tells us, "In the professions that concern the human condition, there is a strong connection between personal dimensions and professional dimensions. In the case of teaching, between what we are and the way we teach" (2017, p. 1121). The construction of teacher identity occurs in the interaction between multiple training experiences, realized in different contexts, in periods demarcated in time, in which the educational relationships with children, professional peers and the community constitute the main levers.

Shulman (1991, p. 394) argues that in order to be a teacher one must not only have some skills, but also make constant reflections about his/her work, understanding that professional knowledge goes through a process of self-construction, to which we add, a shared process. In a work developed by the author in conjunction with Grossman, Wilson (1989), we are told that the teacher needs to possess a substantive knowledge (body of general contents of the

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<sup>2</sup> Momberger's citations were translated by the author of this text.

<sup>3</sup> Free translation.

matter of specific areas of teaching, definitions, conventions and procedures), a syntactic knowledge (ability to interpret and to attribute meaning to knowledge) and beliefs, mentioning the importance of the construction of knowledge and its transmission to be accompanied by personal stances, that is, an awareness of the social usefulness of knowledge and the values that are at play in these processes. In a later text, Shulman (2005) states that there is a pedagogy transversal to all professions, which integrates three kinds of learning: a) cognitive (learning to think as a professional); b) practical (learning to act as a professional); and c) moral (learning to think and act responsibly and ethically). According to Pimenta and Lima (2017), the teaching identity is epistemological and professional; epistemological because it involves a set of knowledge (from the specific areas of knowledge, didactic-pedagogical, broader knowledge of the field of educational practice, knowledge linked to the meaning of human existence), and professional, because it constitutes a specific field of intervention in social practice.

This logic sustains a paradigmatic change in the training process, particularly during internship, when there is a change of perspective from the trainee who implements to the trainee who builds and conducts research from his/her own experience (Suárez and Ochoa, 2005). In this line of thought, the reflections they produce throughout the internship, as narratives of practice, by their reflexive character, potentiate trainees as researchers of their own experience. Narrative documentation enables subjective transformation (Suárez and Ochoa 2005), in which each person, as a total being, subject of training, in his/her relationship with others, constitutes him/herself as a pedagogical subject, with specific knowledge and speech, enabling his/her entry into the professional area of teaching.

The construction of professional learning (Roldão, 2001; Canary, 2001; Imbernón, 2006) takes place in a dynamic relationship with children/students, with the different members of the educational community (teachers, parents, community), with academic knowledge, with educational contexts, in a process that begins in initial training and is developed throughout their professional career. Roldão (2001) emphasizes that teacher education should provide the production of knowledge articulated with professional knowledge generated in action and in reflection on the action, theorized, questioning and questionable, communicable and appropriated by the community of professionals. Canary (2001) highlights the value of learning from experience and its relevance when this occurs in processes of collective discussion. Professional learning is a continuous process of advances and setbacks, in which the subject builds and reconstructs his/her personal and professional identity in a constant go back and forth dynamics (Nóvoa, 1995).

### **3. Vision of the child and teaching action**

One of the strongest scaffolding in the training of educators/teachers, in our view, is the approach to the conceptions of the child /student and the pedagogical relationship that follows. In the process of acquiring and constructing teachers' knowledge, the knowledge that every person develops about the group in which his/her action falls is mediated by the idea of a child, knowledge that will tend to have a multidisciplinary support. The individualization of the educational

action, the ability to assist each student with his/her unique history, knowledge, difficulties, and reactions, will thus be one of the foundations for the construction of professional teaching knowledge. On a day-to-day business, teachers experience situations either with their children or with their parents and/or with other members of the communities, as well as with other members of their work context, situations that can be enhancers of professional learning if they are subject to a shared critical reflection involving both peers and the sciences of education and the specialized sciences.

As advocated in a previous text (Sarmiento, T. and Marques, 2007), the relationships between children/young people and teachers have changed over time, a reality that mirrors what happens in society in general. In families, the relationship will always have a less formal basis, with greater continuity and affective support, while in schools the interaction is more formal and demarcated in time. The instructional purposes prevailing in the school and the sense of possibility of social ascension that it, symbolically and materially, has represented, with a heavy tradition of vertical relationship from the teacher to the student, in a closed and isolated structure of the social whole, may have postponed, in many cases, the perception of the child as a human being (Sarmiento, T., 2017, p. 291). The school has been the context that has most integrated a sense of 'student craft' (Perrenoud, 1995; Sirota, 1993), which appears translated almost exclusively into the development of children as learning beings of the universal knowledge socially regarded as fundamental, often ignoring their global development as human beings. In counterpoint, another vision of a child/student, holder of his/her own opinion, as a thinking social actor, and competent to make choices and express ideas has been establishing itself. This change becomes especially demanding in teacher training, as it requires to call into question representations and practices still very established, according to which the decision-making power was strictly up to teachers (a situation still very present in the experiences of trainees while regular school students, of which greater evidence was gathered in periods of social confinement), requiring a reconceptualization in order to ensure the understanding and effectiveness of the participation of the child/student in his/her educational process. That is, in view of a new understanding of the student, it is necessary to implement a teacher training congruent with these new postures.

#### **4. Teacher training in times of pandemic**

To think of teacher training in times when uncertainty has imposed itself as guaranteed, is indeed a challenge! Looking at what has happened in the last sixteen months – the period of time that has elapsed since the pandemic caused by SARS Cov2 imposed an unknown reality for all of us – in terms of changing daily life (social closure, distance learning, intrafamily coexistence twenty-four hours a day for consecutive months, teacher-student contacts mediated by digital tools, among many others), has in fact posed very exciting challenges to training processes. The initial panic (What's going on? How are we going to deal with this situation? How to follow up on the processes? What are we waiting for? What can we count on?) quickly instigated new support networks among teacher-trainers from different higher education institutions, promoted opportunities for organizing online seminars (of which the II International Cycle of Conferences – Education & Childhood, of the ESE of Leiria is a remarkable example!) and

promoted the creation of new pedagogical strategies in order to sustain the continuity of the commitment to train teachers.

Assuming that the description of processes may have historical interest and that it allows, at the same time, the use of data by future studies, we point out what was done at the Institute of Education of the University of Minho. Thus, as a central aspect, we can mention the optimization of digital resources, either for classes of different disciplines or for access to the visualization of the practices that some educators and teachers share (and began to share even more intensely) on social networks. After a selection of pedagogical practices posted on Facebook pages that comply with the principles advocated in training, the professional administrators of the pages were contacted in order to authorize the admission of our students in these sites. The free viewing of these pages was accompanied weekly by the monitoring of teachers, who occasionally boosted dialogue sessions between the classes and the professional-administrators to clarify aspects to which the visualization alone did not respond. In internships, in long periods realized at a distance, we first were faced with the resistance of some trainees and guiding educators/teachers, fearing their inability to respond to the new requirements; in these situations, the support of supervisors was essential, helping to make the required mediation and supporting new ways of training development. Soon, the trainees, in consequence of training in ICT and its articulation with different curricular units, expressed their creativity in preparing digital resources to support co-members. It should also be emphasized the great concern and commitment of the co-members to the effect that the traineeships would not be made impossible, supporting them in as much as they could and thanking them for the contributions received. The management of the start time and weekly management of the internship was well taken care of, to optimize the opportunities for face-to-face contact, deciding, for example, to start the internship of the year 2020-21 as early as possible, since it was feared (as it indeed happened!) that the winter season would become more serious in terms of pandemic. The supervisory processes, given the constraints of direct access to some chatrooms or classrooms in schools, were made at a distance, with more regular meetings between trainees, guidance teachers and supervisors, mediated, often, by videos of the practices realized, which required additional authorizations of parents and school boards. The organization of Days of Pedagogical Practices internal to EI, and the dissemination of information about online events of interest, constituted, firstly, a central moment of reflection on the training and, secondly, an opportunity to expand the knowledge of other sharing and reflections moments, motivating, even, for new research.

The analysis made to the final reflections of the trainees' portfolios shows that the confrontation with the unexpected highlighted their sense of responsibility during their own training. The situation experienced confronted them with the differences in opportunities that remain in society, making them aware of their social commitment in combating them. At the same time, their imaginative and creative skills have been put to the test to find effective strategies and resources to make their classes dynamic; the understanding and the practice of interaction with families was especially emphasized, but undoubtedly that which was most highlighted was the importance attributed to the interaction between and with children, strengthening the awareness that on the basis of an adequate pedagogical relationship has to be the construction of solid human relationships.

## 5. Systematizing ideas...

After explaining the guiding principles of training that we advocate and after reporting the adaptation made at the University of Minho in times of pandemic, we proceed to present a final summary of our reflection.

Initial professional training requires the existence of a process of co-responsabilization of the different social actors, recognizing the role to be played by everyone. The teaching profession, as already strenuously advocated in this text, is exercised in a collective context, because the teaching action is developed in schools (contexts of multiple interactions), and because children/students, throughout their educational process, deal with many teachers. Organizing training based on strategies that promote professional socialization (seminars, reflective sharing of experiences, and others), makes it possible to create thoughtful and questioning communities of new knowledge.

Bologna highlights the pertinence of the construction of professionals as (self)co-builders of free, responsible, autonomous, and supportive citizens, dimensions that are approached in a transversal way, and that are experienced in the relational climate existing between teachers and students in these training courses. We verified, however, that critical thinking and spontaneous participation are aspects that need to be further worked; taking the floor, expressing an opinion, or contradicting an argument are fundamental skills for the would-be transforming teacher that we advocate. The internship is very focused on didactic aspects, on classroom action, on development of knowledge and on academic content, based on participatory strategies, based on the interests and needs of the children/students, and on their understanding as agents in the process of knowledge construction. Improving conditions for the training experience in the mesosystem, in the departments of teachers, in the school as a whole, in the interaction with families and with communities, is essential to support training in these areas and to consolidate the conception of the relevance of collaborative networks for teaching as a socially compromised action.

The promotion of the digital world as a way to support the processes of interaction and of teaching action, has had, in these times of pandemic, room enough for the strengthening of collaborative networks. The young generations have a training in the digital field that overshadows the knowledge that many teachers have in that area (it must be taken into account that, in Portugal, the average age of the supervising teachers is above 50 years of age, so they belong to a generation digitally different from that of trainees), which means that trainees have had an important role in supporting their advisors, for example, in the preparation of teaching support materials. In addition, the multiplication of training actions, the sharing of practices among professionals, and the implementation of international webinars, enabled the creation of opportunities for access and, in some cases, the insertion in new collaborative training networks.

Finally, it is important to highlight the importance of our insertion, as researchers-trainers, in (inter)national collaborative networks, which was a fundamental support in this unusual period, and that allows us to broaden our gaze, expand the problematization of issues, denaturalizing what proximity can lead us to overshadow, and deepening knowledge that can underlie teacher



training for this world of uncertainty, but a world where, so we believe, education plays a very significant role in fueling new hopes.

Finally, and this is the most important, of the profound experience lived in the pandemic, we emphasize the relevance of the training of educators/teachers to be founded on co-building free, responsible, autonomous and supportive citizens.

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