



Social representations in the construction of professional identity and teachers' activity

Raimunda Abou Gebran* and Zizi Trevizan

Universidade do Oeste Paulista, Rua José Bongiovani, s/n., 19050-920, Presidente Prudente, São Paulo, Brasil. *Autor para correspondência. E-mail: ragebran@hotmail.com

ABSTRACT. The goal of this article is to share the academic debate about the professional identity construction modes of Basic Education teachers and their social representations about the profession. It was used the qualitative research methodology with semi-structured interviews involving 19 teachers in basic education school in the State of São Paulo State. The data generated three categories of analysis: the professional identity and the performance of teachers and their representations about the teaching profession; the construction of autonomy in order to effect emancipatory educational practices; and critical-ideological sense of the teacher in its operating context. The epistemological contribution focused on the study of social representations and professionalization. The results confirmed that the social and cultural structures, historically constituted, were instrumental in construction the professional identity of research subjects and their social representations about the profession.

Keywords: social representation; teacher identity; professionalization.

As representações sociais na construção da identidade profissional e do trabalho docente

RESUMO. O objetivo do presente trabalho é investigar as concepções veiculadas na Revista de Pedagogia (1957 a 1966), no tocante às definições sobre os objetivos e estratégias de intervenção nas escolas isoladas, localizadas no Estado do Paraná. A Revista de Pedagogia teve à sua frente o intelectual e educador Erasmo Pilotto (1910-1992), considerado pela história da educação um dos principais articuladores da Escola Nova no Paraná. A revista em questão foi publicada pela Associação de Estudos Pedagógicos (1956-1970), instituição que teve como principal objetivo a formação de professores primários, buscando discutir planos, propostas e metodologias de ensino, especialmente pensadas para as escolas isoladas, divulgadas principalmente pela Revista de Pedagogia. O aporte teórico desta investigação baseia-se nas considerações de Bourdieu sobre o conceito de intelectual e de sua teoria praxiológica, a fim de analisar a contribuição de Pilotto para o campo educacional. Constituem-se como principais fontes deste trabalho a revista em questão, que contou com cinco volumes e 22 edições, ao lado das obras de Pilotto e Dottrens. Nas fontes citadas, foram analisadas as concepções de Pilotto e como esse se apropriou das contribuições sobre individualização do ensino, presentes na obra de Dottrens.

Palavras-chave: representação social; identidade docente; profissionalização.

Las representaciones sociales en la construcción de la identidad profesional y del trabajo docente

RESUMEN. El objetivo de este artículo es compartir del debate académico sobre los modos de construcción de la identidad profesional de los docentes de la Educación Básica y sus representaciones sociales sobre la profesión. Fue utilizada la metodología de investigación cualitativa con entrevista semiestructurada, involucrando a 19 profesores de una escuela de Educación Básica del interior de São Paulo-Brasil. Los datos generaron tres categorías de análisis: la identidad y la actuación profesional de los profesores y sus representaciones sobre la profesión docente; la construcción de la autonomía con el objetivo de la efectividad de prácticas educativas emancipadoras; y el sentido crítico-ideológico del profesor en su contexto de actuación. El aporte epistemológico se basó en los estudios sobre representaciones sociales y profesionalización docente. Los resultados confirmaron que las estructuras sociales y culturales, históricamente constituidas, fueron determinantes en la construcción de la identidad profesional de los sujetos de la investigación y de sus representaciones sociales sobre la profesión.

Palabras-clave: representación social; identidad docente; profesionalización.

Introduction

For some time now the academic discussion, society and media have approached the complexity of the teaching identity. The attempt at understanding the nature of this activity has been prevented by the representations that society displays about the school and the teacher. This may arise out of representations made up by educational and economic policies, for the purpose of building a teacher's representation which mirrors the desires of that system.

The teaching activity's professionalization, as a process of construction of identities, is a complex issue, since it is related to self-image, autobiography, and representations that teachers have of themselves and other people in their occupational group. This means that the construction of an identity happens among struggles, conflicting ideas where the ways that being and living the occupation are built (Nóvoa, 1992a). Dubar (2005, p. 25) made coherent claims with that author's ideas, such as "[...] the human identity is not bestowed once and for all, from birth: it is built in childhood and, then, it must be rebuilt along the life cycle".

The tension and confrontation with transformations in the representations of the teaching activity, especially from the 90's decade, are linked to changes in the state paradigm and the requirements to spot points of action and sense inside the new representations. Nóvoa (1992a, p. 22), among the "[...] consequences of the discomfort [...]" that has affected the teachers as a whole since the 90's decade, emphasized "[...] personal discouragement and high absence and abandonment, professional dissatisfaction rates translated into a constant divestment and uneasiness". The author claims that this situation, which arose out of paradigmatic changes, has been accompanied by a widespread mistrust feeling in connection with the teachers' skills and quality of their work, encouraged by intellectual circles and politicians that enjoy an important symbolic power in the current information culture.

From the implementation of the neo-liberal politics of regulating control of schools, instituted by government bodies, it is known that that situation, naturally, tends to last, especially since, when the rules to access the teachers' graduation schools are actually addressed, one notes that they are fully unreasonable ones. They are so because they favor the engagement of people that have never imagined they would become teachers and will not achieve anything in this occupation.

Choosing the occupation, for many teachers, is not necessarily a choice, but the result of specific circumstances (an early choice, family opinion) or even, for the majority of teachers in public schools, the lack of more valued options. These professionals follow the career just for the time they cannot be engaged in a more attractive occupation in regard to financial and professional satisfaction. However, many of them remain; and since the temporary choice turns into a final one, they are absorbed by the educational system. At this moment, the choice period has been overcome, and the need to think about the chosen or granted field arises.

The discussion about the theme was provoked by posing the following questions: How do teachers of Basic Education think of themselves as actual teachers? What social representations do they have about their occupation? For the purpose of discussing the historical and cultural processes of identity construction of those professionals, this article addressed the teachers' representations contained in the answers of the own participant teachers. The qualitative approach was used, since, according to André (2005, p. 47), it is guided by the "[...] world of the subjects, the meanings that they confer to their daily experiences, their language, their cultural productions and their ways to socialize". The data were gathered from semi-structured interviews (Lüdke & André, 1986), involving 19 (beginner and experienced) teachers from an Elementary School inland the State of São Paulo. The analysis was supported by the theoretical references of social representations (Moscovici, 1978; 2009; Jodelet, 1985; 2001; Nora, 1993; Certeau, 1994; Bakhtin, 2014) and teachers' professionalization (Nóvoa, 1992a; 1992b; 2005; Altet, 2001; Adorno, 1995; Cunha, 1999; Imbernón, 2010; Gomes, 2013). Therefore, the selected theoretical bases for the development of the research and the thoughts of the interviewees set a "[...] dialogue field [...]" (Garnica, 2008, p. 119) among the academic researchers and the participants in the research.

The dialogic and polyphonic process of this study (Bakhtin, 2014) resulted in three areas of analysis: teachers' identity and representations on the teaching occupation; the building of autonomy for actually implementing emancipatory practices; the criticism and political sense of teachers in the environment they operate. Each area had the most meaningful discourses of the interviewees selected for the purpose of analysis.

Short explanation on the social representation concepts reviewed in the research

The aim of the discussion in this study - analysis of Social representations of Basic Education teachers (involved in the research) and historical and cultural aspects of their professional identities - resumed some theoretical opinions on the subject.

Moscovici's (1978) concepts and thoughts were addressed at first, since this author believes social representations are theories of consensus that are collectively built in social interactions, subject-subject and subject-institution. They are constructed within a certain time, in a specific culture and space, in an attempt at making the stranger a familiar person and taking account of the context. This interaction with the world and partners leads the subject to build knowledge, to socialize little by little, building values, and being aware of ideas that lay in society and transforming them continuously.

According to the author, social representations provide a link to human action and a sense to behavior, and they will integrate it into a relation net, which will help to rebuild and give a new meaning to the social objects. Moscovici (2009) defines the social representation concept as a "[...] a set of values, ideas and practices with a dual function: first, to establish an order which will enable people to be guided in their material and social world and control it; and, second, to make communication happen among the members of a community". The importance of Moscovici's theoretical additions on social representations is emphasized in Jodelet's (2009, p. 22) words:

[...] social representation is a way of a socially prepared and shared knowledge, with a practical goal, which adds to the building of a common reality to a social set. Likewise referred to as common sense or naïve, natural knowledge, this way of knowledge differs from scientific knowledge. However, it is considered an object of study as legitimate as the latter, due to its importance in social life and to the clarification that enables cognitive processes and social interactions.

Therefore, social representations are present in discourses. They are for turning an unfamiliar thing into a familiar something, in the conceptual universe of a group or the interpretation of a new science concept that has been discredited in socialization, by receiving additions and distortions.

Jodelet's theoretical perspective finds an edifying role for communication in the exchanges and interactions that play in the preparation of a consensual universe, which hints at influence and

social belonging phenomena, which are decisive in setting up intellectual systems and their forms. Jodelet (2001, p. 32) thinks that "[...] communication is the transmission vector of language, which actually bears the same representations". According to his reflections, language "[...] applies to the structural and formal aspects of social thought, to the extent it joins social interaction, influence, consensus or disagreements and polemic". (Jodelet, 2001, p. 32).

Therefore, Moscovici's (1978, 2009) theoretical conception and Jodelet's (1985, 2001) additional reflections agree that social representation constitutes a fashion of a socially and culturally prepared and shared knowledge. This representation definition stresses the relevance of the functionality of the context in establishing the psyche, language (communication) and behavior of individuals who, while keeping their individuality, are imbued, in their identity, with a specific reality and common sense of a given set (social group). This line of reflections about the relevance of studies on those social representations, for examining the teacher's occupational identity, had the significant addition of Bakhtin's (2014) studies on the identification of contexts of the social origin of teachers' representations of their professional identity, implied in their speeches. Bakhtin's theory charges the culture's idealistic philosophy and psychologist view with locating ideology in conscience. Bakhtin (2014, p. 34) says that "[...] the own conscience may only emerge and make itself sure of a context by the material incarnation in signals". In other words, Bakhtin (2014, p. 32) says, "[...] wherever the signal is located, the ideological is there [...]" and "[...] everything ideological has a semiotics value". Therefore, language and social representation, according to the author, are mutually corresponding things and constitute a semiotics reality, subject to the "[...] ideological assessment criteria [...]", that is, if it is true or false; right or wrong; warranted or unwarranted.

From this theoretical perspective of a materialistic concept of language, Bakhtin's studies have emphasized that every form that bears a social representation (whether an oral or visual language) is ideological and therefore, it implies the pragmatic and social makes of the historical and cultural context of its origin. In the case of this study, the naivety/ ease could be, then, granted to that teacher who, without criticism, has incorporated representations of a specific social set/ group and use them in their speech and practices, in a likewise way with no criticism. In other words, in Education, there is often the identification (in teachers'

discourse) of repetition, of “[...] what has been said before [...]” (Eco, 1980, p. 208), in connection with specific social representations, which were inherited by them in their social and professional interactions. However, they do not use the required independence which is inherent in all and any process of communicative, social interaction, according to Bakhtin.

When the subjects are not aware of their representations, their actions are guided by culturally rooted practices along the years and do not grant or identify the effects of meaning and pertinence of them, in the social scope. Maybe this results from the fact that society demands them to accept the practices as natural and regular ones. In this case, representations may work out as stereotypes of what teachers should do, while the reasons and criticisms remain unseen, as well as the true political and ideological motives for their actions. In this regard, the teachers’ representations and their hidden remembrances (Nora, 1993), however critical for the day-to-day practices (Certeau, 1994), should be investigated and discussed, since, certainly, they would carry weight in building the ways to make teaching more professionalized; the importance of this reflection on the teacher's occupation lies in the likelihood of turning not only the condition of teachers as authors/ subjects into a problem, but also identifying and discussing the representations of the occupational group.

The social representations, in this study, therefore, are made up from a complex of dialogic (ideological) relations resulting from live interaction with the world materiality; likewise, the human discourse has always featured a polyphonic (collective) process due to the multiple influences implied in social representations. Therefore, in this text, the analysis of the interviewed teachers is valuable, as their dialogic and polyphonic nature are (Bakhtin, 2014), as expressed in their speeches. Next, this what will presented and discussed.

Analysis and discussion of the gathered data

Teachers’ identity and representations about the teaching occupation.

Making teaching professional does not take a decree or exclusion; therefore, teachers have to be aware that the “[...] subject is unique [...]”, but “[...] they only exist when they share a collectivity, and will build visions of a world and enhance themselves through several interactions in search of their own transformation and the transformation of the world” (Gomes, 2013, p. 35); that transformation, in

Education, therefore, is made by continuous construction of new representations, new meanings for what teaching is as an occupation. The process of constructing a professional teaching identity is in connection both with self-image, autobiography, and representations that teachers make of themselves and others, in their professional group. In other words, Nóvoa (1992a) has explained that identity entails a place of struggles, conflicts where the ways of being and living the occupation are constructed.

According to Bakhtin (2014), man, a natural individual, as a biologic organism (physical identity) is different from the social individual, as a semiotic superstructure in connection with continuous changes in life. Therefore, professional identity, as one of the aspects of social identity, is built at the workplace, through a continuous shaping as the teacher's tasks, their knowledge, experiences, struggles, and needs are developing. This aims at devising strategies of change, as perceived in the speech of a participating teacher in this research (D1): “[...] at each class, we keep adapting ourselves to provide the best, both to students and the whole school. Saying that this is an easy process would be a misleading statement to myself and my students”. And, finally: “Therefore, I want to be an educator that meets the needs of all students on an optimized and gradual basis”. D1’s foregoing speech reminds us of Bakhtin’s reflection on the hegemonic speech: the word teacher (who guides and teaches something) is replaced by a more flexible word which is coherent with the school that welcomes everyone and has the cultural duty to educate and shelter; therefore, it emphasizes the educator's voice, who is charge of both managing syllabus content and being, at the same time, a kind authority and partner at all times: “[...] sometimes I feel I’m a mix of authority, friend, moderator, and an educator above all.” (D1). The weight of having assumed the duty by the professional is conveyed in this discourse. One gets the impression that everything ratifies the harmonic ideal of the school, and the speech only slightly addresses the difficulties the teachers face every day. Therefore, D1’s identity has been delineated in the speech of a satisfactory definition of himself/herself which likewise comprises the institution, where he/she works. The knowledge that upholds the teaching occupation certainly requires a constant update of professional training; this is conveyed by D1’s speech, in which the teaching concept is translated into a process (by using the verb in the gerund form, a continuous form): “At each class, we keep adapting ourselves to provide the best [...]”. In this procedural point-of-

view of the teaching activity, the dynamics of professional changes and the ensuing changes in identity in behalf of the work, Dubar (2005, p. 37) has stated that "[...] employment rules the construction of social identities [...]", since, faced with important changes, the work "[...] resorts to subtle identity changes". The speech of Teacher 1 enables to infer that the teacher's identity means to be part of an occupation that is in a continuous process of reviewing the social and educational definitions. The dynamics of that construction of the occupational identity enables to understand it as a transactional result between the subject, the social group and the institutional context, which will encourage the teachers to adopt, on a systematic basis, the use of pro-active answers, added by flexibility, adaptability, creativity, to face the daily educational problems, whose solutions do not entail the simple application of knowledge, as stated by the interviewee (D1): "Saying that this is an easy process would be a misleading statement to myself and my students". This sentence, instead of asserting how easy the process is, exposes the technical rationality of dealing with complex situations inherent in the pedagogic work,

Teacher (D2) has a different discourse: "I see the content of the subject with keen eyes. I need to be more organized in activities, show to my students how much I cherish them". Her speech is rather restricted to the need "[...] to see the content of the subject with keen eyes [...]", to the requirement of being "[...] more organized in activities[...]", and her awareness of the importance of showing "[...] how much I cherish [...]" and she will not make a statement on the process that makes up her occupation.

D1's professional identity is perceived as a result of the own concept of the teaching action as a process (which is supported by the use of the verb in the gerund tense), that is, it stresses the continuous action of being, constructing herself, and undergoing changes; and the fact that she is constantly searching for balance: "[...] sometimes I feel I'm a mix of authority, friend, moderator, and an educator above all". However, D2's speech has cultural data from an identity shaped by the assignment of value to the content of the subject (performance of the syllabus and teaching content plan); the institutional requirement for a better organization in activities; and the actual self-criticism of being more affectionate towards the students.

Finally, the analysis of the answers given by D1 and D2 has disclosed that: on the one hand, a personal background of a teacher arises, with the

streamlining, responsibility, self-esteem requirements and, further, with being able to perform the work and life plan; on the other hand, the presence of the regulating requirements of the Institutions, in particular the School's and the State's, which emphasize the mottoes and evaluation, to which teaching and learning must already have their definitive places and purposes. D1 says: "I want to be an educator that meets the needs of all students on an optimized and gradual basis"; and D2: "I see the content of the subject with keen eyes"; "I need to be more organized". Either way, both subjects of the research disclose speeches that are subordinated to the central axis of the educational system, which is instrumental in the processes of identity construction and their holder.

According to Gomes (2013, p. 37), in mentioning Dubar's (2005) study, "[...] each identity construction has, now, a mixed shape and inside it the old identities are in conflict with the new requirements".

In our view, D1's speech reacts to and confirms a professional identity that is aware of the need to overcome the technical rationality, and it appears to have been produced within a "[...] process of searching for new solutions for the daily problems experienced in educational institutions [...]", as recommended by Gomes (2013, p. 86). D2's speech, guided by the concern with subject content and the best organization in activities, unveils the representations of a teaching system focused on the transmission of the content of knowledge (established in syllabuses and teaching plans) and, therefore, memorized and applied in classes, without the required criticisms about the complexity of knowledge and the equally complex teaching ways, which presume the dynamics of meaning and redefinition, which are included in the human, historical, cultural and procedural knowledge.

According to Pimenta & Anastasiou (2014, p. 50), "[...] the recent approaches to the practice epistemology - which understands teaching as a complex phenomenon [...]" consider the school space as a whole", in which practices and research meet, both inserted in a "[...] movement for critical and collective thinking [...]", seeking to overcome "[...] an individualistic perspective in behalf of a (socially committed) perspective".

Therefore, the exclusive concern with the subject content cannot, alone, handle that complexity pointed out by Pimenta and Anastasiou (2014) in the school context. More than a concern with content, or a concern with the (disciplinary) organization of the activities - teaching requires that the teacher should have an epistemological

knowledge of social representations theories, complexity and interdisciplinary theories, to warrant, in their daily work, an emancipatory reason, open to new ways of seeing themselves as an autonomous professional - an issue that will be addressed below.

The construction of autonomy for the purpose of implementing emancipatory practices.

Upon analyzing the teacher's autonomy, for the purposes of instituting emancipatory educational practices, one resorts to Adorno & Horkheimer's (1985) critical theory and Adorno (1992, 1995), authors who think that schools are not fit for dominance relations but certainly a place where social emancipation must be learned. Freire's studies ((1992, 2001) emphasize dialogic relations, without dominant voices, the path to a culture of shared choices and decisions; and Foucault (2003, 2004) discloses the weaving of power webs and the required confrontation.

From our point of view, the expert knowledge, the pedagogic training, the building of a teacher's professional identity, the evaluation of quality, the social reputation, an ethics code are important for the definition of one's autonomy in the occupation. Lüdke (2005) criticizes teaching, when he says it is an occupation full of competence failures, it does not promote autonomy, it has no control; and its social importance is quite disregarded. However, these negative features, pointed out by Lüdke (2005), lack, far from justifications, a more accurate understanding, supported by investigations of the background, cultural and economic information that led to this structure. Note that, in spite of criticisms to school and teachers, this Institution has continued to play an important social role and meet several demands. Therefore, a greater value must be given to research that takes into account the several opinions of those involved in this professional area.

Upon explaining autonomy, Alves (2008) has reported that its existence means to have authority, that is, to have the strength to speak on behalf of itself, be able to teach a line of conduct, a thought, have something to teach to someone else, have a message to be delivered. In other words, one must be the author of their own speech and ways of action, which implies the need for coherence between saying and doing, action and knowledge. On the other hand, the existence and endurance of the autonomy sense among teachers become complex issues, in a professional context of a school, which has been contaminated by dominance relations and tied to the State's bureaucratic forces.

Adorno (1995) claims that a good training is

based on the continuous exercise of a humanistic point of view, understood as a process that enables man to live in society and be able to create a critical awareness and, therefore, have their autonomy. Therefore, Education only makes sense when it favors the conditions for a criticism that is self-reflexive, which will grant freedom and responsibility to the subject.

Freire (2001) has stated that no one will have autonomy if one is not able to decide. Autonomy is built through the experience of several decisions that have been made. And autonomy's pedagogy, the author concludes, must be at the center of the encouraging experiences of decisions made and responsibility, that is, experiences that comply with freedom. Autonomy is built in contexts where freedom and strength exist, without waiving individuality and with desire and endeavor in the set up of solidary and individual spaces.

From these presumptions, this topic of the study tried to understand whether, from the teachers' opinion on their own professional performance, there are statements of attitudes that add to a process of a greater autonomy for them. The analysis was based on four aspects that unveil the construction of autonomy: a) the attempt at breaking away from relations of power - which implies a sense of duty; b) self-regulation of the teaching activity; c) intellectual autonomy - choices and decision-making; d) contradictions. If the first aspect is taken into account - an attempt at breaking away from relations of power, which will imply a sense of duty - the speeches of the interviewees disclose the concern with keeping relations of power that are conveyed in the imposition of order and discipline:

I believe in discipline, since everyone should learn how to follow rules, be organized, comply with agreements, and explain the reasons why we have to comply with them (Teacher 1).

My image as a teacher is of someone who enforces discipline, and, especially on account of my personality, even disregards 'personal relations.' Perhaps in my daily teaching chores I am more aware of the content of the subject I teach than the image that my student projects of me (Teacher 14, emphases added).

I am involved with my job in a systematic way; I comply with and enforce the compliance with the rules of the Institution and I try to learn them deeply. I am a reserved person, and when I communicate myself with someone, I speak directly, in a congruent way and try to be brief (Teacher 19).

The teachers' arguments disclose a strong sense of compliance with the established rules, something

that is in keeping with Ramos-de-Oliveira's (2003) thoughts, who emphasizes how much the system is committed to standardize the teacher, since none of the interviewed participants hinted that the need to overcome the disciplinary model is a problem. Teacher 1 only mentions the need to explain the disciplinary reasons; but is this enough in a context of complex and linked relations, which starts at the own representation of power and control that school maintains in their culture? This question hints at Foucault (2004), who mentions control and dissent, which will lead to other questions on how to manage the daily school activity, knowing that, faced with control, dissension should arise.

On the other hand, other excerpts from the teachers' speeches disclose ruptures, that is, attempts at breaking away from the relations of power, which are meaningful elements in building (teachers' and students') autonomy. These elements will emphasize the critical sense, a sense of freedom, responsibility, knowledge, the dissension from prejudices of the creativity, and the attempt at solving the problems in order to actually reach an emancipatory social behavior:

I also believe I have to learn how to learn. (Teacher 1).

I try to teach not only the conceptual content, but also the attitude- and procedure-related content, which will help prepare the student for life; with sense of criticism and freedom/responsibility to clear up the daily difficulties (Teacher 2).

A teacher that is reborn every day, to face new challenges and harvest the fruits of maturity, revise concepts, break away from prejudices, solve new problems, by facing them with knowledge. By being creative and making the required changes in connection with my students' specific needs (Teacher 9).

An underlying restlessness exists in these answers. The teachers are concerned with meeting the institutional requirements, but they understand they need to go beyond, in the student's critical and specific training, which implies the own dissent from standardization and raises possibilities of exercising decision-making in the progress of the teaching activities, with experiences that pay heed to the student's freedom (Freire, 2001). This restlessness, however, establishes, once again, an epistemological discussion about the educational area. This could lead to lose the ties with the institutional discourse, that carries the weight of the pedagogic literature chosen by the dominance of the area, which is used in the teachers' speech.

Next, in the discussion of the second aspect of this paper - self-government or self-regulation of the teaching occupation - we have emphasized some of the teachers' speeches that convey the awareness that the teacher is responsible for their own way of being a teacher and how they go about teaching:

Being a teacher means more than educating. It means to work with love, dedication and competence, aware that I play an important role in educating citizens (my students). I think that besides expanding the students' knowledge, I need also to broaden my own. The starting point will be my professional practice (Teacher 11).

As any educator in the 21st century, I have my conflicts and challenges to be overcome every day. However, my main strategy to win my students' trust is to make them my friends. I try to be a charismatic teacher during classes, and I will always heed to each student's individuality and profile of the several classes I work with (Teacher 18).

The identification and statement about the critical and reflexive individuality in the occupation (the ability the professionals have to see themselves and others) favor strong attitudes towards standardization, which is so harmful to the constructive educational interaction. The teacher being, when aware of themselves, may be the origin of what Fleuri (2008, p. 470) has called an opening for "[...] establishing disobedient agreements to hierarchy or fostering fellowships in parallel with it".

In addition, upon analyzing the third aspect - autonomy: choices and decision-making processes - a concern with the professional performance and searching to bridge gaps is noted. These are done through a shared work, associated also with professional satisfaction, by achieving the scheduled goals for the productive development of the students' activities, as shown by Teacher 2's speech: "The plan of my activities tries to achieve the goals; and it is clear that when they are achieved, I feel satisfied. Surely, I still make mistakes, which I try to correct with the help of professionals and friends that share the same occupation". In other situations, the autonomy is disclosed in a humanist discourse, in which being a teacher means he/she who not only teaches, but also learns. And once again, the sensibility to cooperative interaction and mutual respect is present: Teacher 13 states she "[...] is open to changes [...]" and asserts that "[...] her goal is to provide learning [...]" and, in this path, she asserts that "[...] we also learn". Teacher 4 says she is concerned with "[...] targets to be achieved [...]" and with "[...] what I can offer as a person to shaping citizens". She says she "[...] keeps always alert to the received suggestions and criticisms". She

believes in “[...] mutual respect [...]” as the “[...] key to a good sociability and construction of a quality education”.

The transcribed statements address concerns that disclose the awareness that the teacher must take the responsibility for their practice. This may be the path to overcome what Adorno (1995) calls a ‘half-practice’ or intellectual minority. They also have a perception of the need to enhance interpersonal relations in the school life, with the adoption of an education in citizenship.

Finally, the examination of the fourth aspect - contradictions - discloses speeches that assign to the teacher an excessive focus on the teaching action. For example: “I try to find if the child has understood what I have just explained. I worry when I do not get any feedback from them. I am friendly, and want all students to advance their learning skills in every conceptual content and also the moral value of each one of them.” This assertion by teacher 3, chiefly when she says: “I worry when I do not get any feedback from them [...]”, grants an excessive value to the delivering party and the disclosed content, while the acknowledgement of the student’s ability to recreate plays a small role and it refers to a statement by Freire (2001), the so-called bench education.

It is further noted a certain ambiguity in some speeches, since the teachers set the purpose of studying aside, which should be a feature of their own reflection for a professional emancipation, to highlight their relations of affection, feelings and care for the students in the classroom: “I care for them as a person, I worry about their feelings. I am always on alert, since when I have difficulties I seek help from my workmates!” (Teacher 6).

Vilela (2007), availing himself of Adorno’s studies, states that the increase in educational opportunities has not resulted in the best training for people. The search for knowledge, its creation and re-creation, is the basis for an education aimed at autonomy. The analysis of the interviewed teachers’ speech enabled to find that, at several instances, they disclose the understanding of the need to get away from standardization and assume their (conceptual and practical) choices; but they end up emphasizing that the disciplinary, controlling and hegemonic power of the State has remained. They further emphasize the relevance of the affectionate role of the teacher, rather than the appreciation of a teacher’s critical and reflexive stance, in their professional relations (interactions) with the students.

The teacher’s critical and ideological sense in their operating context

Reflection, as defined by Shulman (1987), is related to the revision, reaction, critical analysis, and reconstruction, made by the own teacher about their concepts, representations and performance in the classroom, with explanations based on evidence. This means that teachers need to examine their own actions, be involved with them, analyze them, and, thus, improve their performance in the process of professional reconstruction. This is so because reflection implies, according to Gomes (2013), the conscious immersion of man into the world of his experience, a world loaded with connotations, values, symbolic exchanges, social interests and political scenarios. According to Bakhtin (2014), the social and cultural structures, historically constituted, interfere with the subjects’ identity construction. Therefore, upheld by this philosophy, an analysis of the interviewees’ answers was conducted and the conclusion is that they disclose their concepts of and social representations on the teaching occupation.

In short: on the one hand, the profile of the teacher established that they are culturally linked to an ancient educational model (19th century) which, according to Imbernón (2010, p. 11), values the “[...] notional and unchangeable knowledge of sciences as an underlying feature of education”. In addition, from our point of view, that model used to subject the educational practice to the educational and institutional organization. This subordination reduced Education to a simple, linear relation between teacher and student so that the former should pass on the subjects’ content to the latter and confirm this transference, through the sole checking of whether the taught content had been assimilated. The model, in spite of having been evolved during the 20th century, has maintained the centralistic and transmission origin of education along several decades. This model became clear also in this research, through Teacher 3’s discourse, when she disclosed that (in 2014) her occupational concern was focused mainly on checking what the students had understood from the content she had taught. Note that, in Teacher 3’s behavior, which was also found in other speeches collected in the research, a personal professional procedure was disclosed, out of context, which focused on the teaching person and the administered content.

According to Imbernón (2010, p. 17), “[...] since the educational practice is personal and contextual, it needs a situation that starts from its problem situations”. As a matter of fact, the critical identification, that a teaching practice starts from its

problem situations in a specific practical context, is a feature element for an innovative educational model, which fits the democratic, plural, integrating, inclusive society of the 21st century. The model was further found in other speeches of several interviewed teachers. Teacher 9 used several expressions and phrases in his statements that confirm the finding of a new fashion of teaching, by taking into account the historical and cultural movement, experienced by knowledge and the own professionals. The professional profile that arises out of teacher 9's discourse is the feature of a "[...] teacher that should be born again every day [...]"; who faces "[...] new challenges [...]"; who is in pursuit of "[...] harvesting the fruits of maturity [...]"; "[...] review concepts [...]"; "[...] break away from prejudices [...]"; "[...] seek solutions for new problems [...]"; finally, a teacher that makes the "[...] required adaptations to the students' [...] peculiarities".

This small sample of differentiated fashions, that Teachers 3 and 9 conceived about the practice and professional identity, has confirmed that the teachers' psyche and, evidently, the grades of their (critical and ideological) professional behavior are established by the historical and cultural context (of their personal and collective experiences).

Concepts and representations on the teacher's professional identity were further disclosed, which are tied to specific (background) contexts of education, already pointed out in Cunha's studies (1999): the teaching missionary model, affected by catholic Christianity (a priestly view); and the concept of teaching as a motherly (female) activity bestowed by God and based on love, dedication, and delicacy in handling the students like a flower. (Teacher 7's speech). This kind of discourse, fixed by memory, implies representations that help with the cultural sedimentation, along the history of education, of the concept of the teaching occupation as a priesthood (Nóvoa, 1992a).

But, at the same time, we have seen that other teachers' speeches, recorded in the research data, also point out to the building of an identity based on multiple social motivations. The special emphasis is on the investigation and check of the own practice, which will point out the multifunctional aspects of the occupation: "I try to work not only the conceptual content, but also the attitude- and procedure-related content. This will help the student's training for life; with critical sense and freedom/responsibility to overcome the daily difficulties". This speech by Teacher 2, differently from the already discussed speech of Teacher 7, is far from the priestly model of the occupation and

announces its self-reflexive professional condition. It conveys his frequent themes on his educational practices, and discloses the critical awareness of his (personal) intellectual limitations and the need for a shared building of scientific knowledge and practices: "I plan my activities and strive to reach the goals. To do so, I try to evaluate myself constantly [...]".

Surely, the interaction with the world and partners leads the subject to prepare the critical and ideological knowledge and start to socialize with others, build values and assume the ideas that go around in society. Men attempt, by different ways, to explain the context that surrounds them and this is why they set up social representations. Therefore, they are shared forms of explaining the context, the social objects, through language. According to Bakhtin (2014), every discourse arises out of a social and cultural context and is made up of an individual speech, based on the polyphony of the collective.

Final considerations

Research has confirmed that it is not possible to make actual changes, in education, if one ignores how teachers think; how they operate; how they represent their work; and how the conditions of this work allow them to take a position of criticism, faced with educational innovations suggested by reforms.

The professional identity of the teachers who participated in this research has been reconstructed, from the overlapping of certain historical and cultural features that have shaped and expressed that identity, as it was stated in their interviews. And it was evidenced that these identity features of the interviewed teachers have resulted from their experience with relations, linked, to a lesser or greater extent, to a series of milestones (school, syllabus, interaction with the community, the practice of the occupation), during the professional career. This career has always been inter-related with the initial and continuous training.

In short, the analysis of the oral discourses of the interviewed teachers disclosed the actual divergences of opinions in the definition of the teacher profile: in several instances, the profile of a dialogic professional is exposed, he/she who is worried about making their choices and stand out due to their criticism in the training of cooperative collectives. In other speeches, the figure of an isolated teacher has still prevailed, of an inscrutable person in their relation with the students and focused only on passing on notional content, established in the syllabus and teaching plans.

These diverging opinions, on social representations and construction of teacher's identity and work, draw the attention of researchers on Education to the need for collective projects (about integration of the University with Basic School) to require the insertion of teachers in the theoretical and scientific, and practical context of Education in the 21st century, based on the complexity of human and social relations.

References

- Adorno, T. W. (1992). *Mínima moralia: reflexões a partir da vida danificada* (L. E. Bicca, trad.). São Paulo, SP: Ática.
- Adorno, T. W. (1995). *Educação e emancipação*. (W. L. Marr, trad. e intr.). São Paulo, SP: Paz e Terra.
- Adorno, T. W., & Horkheimer, M. (1985). *Dialética do esclarecimento*. Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Zahar.
- Altet, M. (2001). As competências do professor profissional: entre conhecimentos, esquemas de ação e adaptação, saber analisar. In L. Paquay, P. Perrenoud, M. Altet, & É. Charlier, (Org.), *Formando professores profissionais: Quais estratégias? Quais competências?* (p. 23-35). Porto Alegre: Artmed.
- Alves, L. (2008). Aprendizagem em rede e formação docente: trilhando caminhos para a autonomia, a colaboração e a cooperação. In I. P. A. Veiga, & C. D'Ávila. *Profissão docente: novos sentidos, novas perspectivas* (p. 151-164). Campinas, SP: Papirus.
- André, M. E. D. (2005). *Estudo de caso em pesquisa e avaliação institucional*. Brasília, DF: Liberlivros.
- Bakhtin, M. (2014). *Marxismo e filosofia da linguagem: problemas fundamentais do método sociológico na ciência da linguagem* (1a ed., M. Lahud & Y. F. Vieira, trad.). São Paulo, SP: Hucitec.
- Certeau, M. (1994). *A invenção do cotidiano: artes de fazer*. (E. F. Alves, trad.). Petrópolis, RJ: Vozes.
- Cunha, M. I. (1999). Profissionalização docente: contradições e perspectivas. In I. P. A. Veiga, & M. I. Cunha (Orgs.), *Desmistificando a profissionalização do magistério* (p. 127-147). Campinas, SP: Papirus.
- Dubar, C. (2005). *A socialização: construção das identidades sociais e profissionais*. São Paulo, SP: Martins Fontes.
- Eco, U. (1980). *Tratado geral de semiótica* (A. P. Danesi & G. C. C. Souza, trad.). São Paulo, SP: Perspectiva.
- Fleuri, R. M. (2008). Rebelião e democracia na escola. *Revista Brasileira de Educação*, 13(39), 470-482. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/S1413-24782008000300005.
- Foucault, M. (2003). *A ordem do discurso* (9a ed.). São Paulo, SP: Loyola.
- Foucault, M. (2004). *Vigiar e punir: nascimento da prisão* (28a ed.). Petrópolis, RJ: Vozes.
- Freire, P. (1992). *Educação como prática de liberdade*. São Paulo, SP: Paz e Terra.
- Freire, P. (2001). *Pedagogia da autonomia*. São Paulo, SP: Paz e Terra.
- Garnica, A. V. M. (2008). *A experiência do labirinto: metodologia, história oral e educação matemática*. São Paulo, SP: Unesp.
- Gomes, M. de O. (2013). *Formação de professores na educação infantil* (2a ed.). São Paulo, SP: Cortez.
- Imbernón, F. (2010). *Formação docente e profissional: formar-se para a mudança e a incerteza* (8a ed.). São Paulo, SP: Cortez.
- Jodelet, D. (1985). La representación social: fenómenos, concepto y teoría. In S. Moscovici (Org.), *Psicología Social* (p. 469-494). Barcelona, ES: Paidós.
- Jodelet, D. (2001). *As representações sociais* (L. Ulip, trad.). Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Eduerj.
- Lüdke, M. (2005). O educador: um profissional? In V. M. Candau (Org.), *Rumo a uma nova didática* (16a ed., p. 73-76). Petrópolis, RJ: Vozes.
- Lüdke, M., & André, M. (1986). *Pesquisa em educação: abordagens qualitativas*. São Paulo, SP: EPU.
- Moscovici, S. (1978). *A representação social da psicanálise* (A. Cabral, trad.). Rio de Janeiro, RJ: Zahar.
- Moscovici, S. (2009). *Representações sociais: investigações em psicologia social*. Petrópolis, RJ: Vozes.
- Nora, P. (1993). Entre memória e história: a problemática dos lugares. *Revista do Programa de Estudos de Pós-graduados em História e do Departamento de História (PUC-SP)*, 1(10), 8-27. Recuperado de <https://revistas.pucsp.br/index.php/revph/article/viewFile/12101/8763>
- Nóvoa, A. (1992a). *Profissão professor*. Porto, PT: Porto Editora.
- Nóvoa, A. (1992b). *Vidas de professores*. Porto, PT: Porto Editora.
- Nóvoa, A. (2005). Trabalho de cooperação: entrevista. *Atividades e Experiências*, 6(2), 11-12.
- Pimenta, S. G., & Anastasiou, L. G. C. (2014). *Docência no ensino superior* (5a ed.). São Paulo, SP: Cortez.
- Ramos-de-Oliveira, N. (2003). Educação e emancipação. In R. L. L. Barbosa (Org.), *Formação de educadores: desafios e perspectivas* (p. 297-307). São Paulo, SP: Unesp.
- Shulman, L. S. (1987) Knowledge and teaching: foundation of the new reform. *Harvard Educational Review*, 57(1), 1-22. doi 10.17763/haer.57.1.j463w79r56455411
- Vilela, R. A. T. (2007). Críticas e possibilidades da educação e da escola na contemporaneidade: lições de Theodor Adorno para o currículo. *Educação em Revista*, (45), 223-248. doi 10.1590/S0102-46982007000100012

Received on December 14, 2016.

Accepted on April 26, 2017.

License information: This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

INFORMATION ABOUT AUTHORS

Raimunda Abou Gebran: a graduate in Geography from the Júlio de Mesquita Filho State of São Paulo University (1973), a graduate in Pedagogy from the University of Marília (1982), holder of a Master's Degree in Education from the State University of Campinas (1990) and a Doctor's Degree in Education from the State University of Campinas (1996). Currently, she is the head professor of the Graduation Program in Education (Master's Degree) at Universidade do Oeste Paulista /UNOESTE University - Presidente Prudente campus (State of São Paulo): School Context and Teaching and Learning Process - actions and interactions; and Research Group filed with CNPq, Júlio de Mesquita Filho State of São Paulo University (UNESP), College of Sciences and Technology (FTC), Presidente Prudente (SP.): Teachers' Training and Teaching Practices in Basic and Superior Education of the Júlio de Mesquita Filho State of São Paulo University (UNESP). She has background on the Education area, with emphasis in teaching methodology, and practices chiefly the following themes: teachers' action, construction of knowledge, elementary teaching, teaching-learning and geography teaching.

E-mail: ragebran@hotmail.com

ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-8050-4932>

Zizi Trevisan: Holder of a Doctor's and Master's degree in Liberal Arts from the Júlio de Mesquita Filho State of São Paulo University (UNESP), College of Liberal Arts - FCL/ Assis (SP). Teacher and researcher of the Portuguese Language Literatures Department Master's and Doctor's Degree in the Liberal Arts area (FCL/UNESP), Assis (SP.), until 1990. A retired teacher by the Department of Education of the Júlio de Mesquita Filho State of São Paulo University (UNESP), College of Sciences and Technology (FCT) in Presidente Prudente (SP), in 1995. Pro-Rector for Research and Graduate degree (2005/2013) and Pro-Rector of Extension and Community Action (2001/2011) in the Oeste Paulista University - UNOESTE, Presidente Prudente (SP). She is currently a Teacher and Researcher in the Master's Degree Course on Education at UNOESTE. She is the author and co-author of several scientific books and articles in the Education and Linguistics, Liberal Arts areas. She has background on research with focus on Semiotics and Education; Teaching and Learning Verbal and Visual Languages. A current participant in Research and Studies Groups: Research Group enrolled with CNPq, Oeste Paulista University/UNOESTE - Presidente Prudente (SP): School Context and Teaching and Learning Process - actions and interactions. Center for Studies in Reading and Child and Juvenile Literature (CELLIJ), Research Group enrolled with CNPq, Júlio de Mesquita Filho State of São Paulo University (UNESP), College of Sciences and Technology (FTC), Presidente Prudente (SP.). A Permanent Associate Member of the Group of Discursive Study Group (GED), Júlio de Mesquita Filho State of São Paulo University (UNESP), College of Sciences and Liberal Arts (FCL), Assis (SP.).

E-mail: zizi@unoeste.br

ORCID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-7063-2455>