

# Memory, identity and teaching: reference-memories of beginning teachers in higher education<sup>1</sup>

## *Memória, identidade e docência: recordações-referência de professores iniciantes na Educação Superior*

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### ABSTRACT

This article aims to analyze reference-memories of three teachers beginning their careers in higher education, through (auto)biographical research. For that, an interview was used with questions about life history, school education, academic path and professional development. The aspects highlighted by them in the study demonstrated considerable elements in the choice of the profession and the constitution of teaching learning. In view of the reference-memories, it was evident that the marks and images of teaching come from a repertoire of these subjects' own life history. Such reminiscences are loaded with positive and happy feelings configured by the family influence in the referred choice, by trajectories with the old masters, in addition to the games and the processes of insertion/initiation to teaching at the university. Learning in this area did not happen in a neutralized way, but rather woven by the training paths experienced by teachers in their life stories and by professional journeys in maintaining or overcoming beliefs and values about the teaching profession. Furthermore, the subjectivities that permeate the construction of teachers' identity were seen, that is, how

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they were constituted in the profession and in various historical contexts of formation.

*Keywords:* Narratives. Reference-memories. Beginning teacher. Higher education.

## RESUMO

Este trabalho objetiva analisar recordações-referência de três professores em início de carreira na educação superior, por meio da pesquisa (auto) biográfica. Para tanto, empregou-se uma entrevista narrativa com questionamentos sobre a história de vida, a formação escolar, o percurso acadêmico e o desenvolvimento profissional. Os aspectos salientados por eles no estudo demonstraram elementos significativos na escolha pela profissão e a constituição da aprendizagem docente. Diante das recordações-referência, evidenciou-se que as marcas e imagens da docência advêm de um repertório da própria história de vida desses sujeitos. Tais reminiscências são carregadas de sentimentos positivos e alegres configurados pela influência familiar na referida escolha, por trajetórias com os antigos mestres, além das brincadeiras e dos processos de inserção/iniciação à docência na universidade. A aprendizagem nessa área não aconteceu de maneira neutralizada, mas sim tecida pelos percursos formativos vividos pelos professores em suas histórias de vida e pelos caminhos profissionais na manutenção ou superação de crenças e valores sobre a profissão docente. Ademais, visualizaram-se as subjetividades que permeiam a construção da identidade dos docentes, ou seja, como se constituíram na profissão e nos diversos contextos históricos de formação.

*Palavras-chave:* Narrativas. Recordações-referência. Professor iniciante. Educação superior.

## Introduction

The aim of this study is to analyze the reference-memories of three teachers at the beginning of their careers in higher education, through (auto)biographical research. Interest in the theme arises in the context of the limitations experienced in this field (GATTI; BARRETO, 2009), articulated by the small number of researches on beginning teacher's teaching in higher level education in Brazil (SOARES, 2019; PAPI; MARTINS, 2010). This brief projection allows us to observe that, throughout the history of education, this profession has been an

urgent theme in the valorization policies, and, linked to this, competences and skills are imposed on teacher educators who meet the economic and social concerns in training new teachers to work in schools.

According to Josso (2010, p. 40), it is assumed that beginning teachers' lived experiences become important mechanisms for understanding themselves and personal and professional identity, because "the reference memories constituting the narratives of formation, tell not what life has taught them, but what has been learned experientially in the circumstances of life". These elements allow the understanding of significant facts in the training of teachers and subject to identification in their own life history (DOMINICÉ, 2010). Under a (auto)biographical bias, it is possible to trace, in the narratives, the personal and professional paths interwoven in the formative process, especially to beginning teachers who have zero to five years of work, according to Soares (2019), who build styles and didactics profiles commonly based on reminiscences of school and academic itineraries.

In the institutional context, the beginning teacher demonstrates feelings of joy, doubt and insecurity, especially in relation to the tasks assigned, as the territory of the classroom and the construction of the class itself (GARCIA, 1999). The first years of teaching can represent moments of losses and gains, mainly due to the challenges faced in the construction of teaching or giving up the profession (CAVACO, 1999). This author states that the initiation phase in this context characterized by the lack or building necessary skills and competencies to the teacher to overcome the demands of school culture and pedagogical practice and are grounded, for the most part, by tensions, conflicts and overruns.

This career phase, according to Huberman (1992), is a space-time of discoveries, desires and (dis)encounters. At that moment, there are intensifications in the learning process of being a teacher and contradictions in the transition from being a student to being a teacher (PAPI; MARTINS, 2010). According to Tardif (2014, p. 86), "the beginning of a career is also accompanied by a critical phase, as it is from the certainties and conditions of practical experience, that teachers judge their previous university education". This is explained, once most of the research at the time analyzed by the author, teachers in early career showed a certain passivity towards the new, a criticism referred to in the studies of Cavaco (1999) and Brzezinski (2016).

In fact, the beginning of teaching is a significant and remarkable moment for the teacher, as it is a period of validation, denial or omission of the memories built in the course of life. Specifically in higher education, investigations also demonstrate that this initial phase is understood as learning, with trials, errors and successes (BOZU, 2010; CUNHA, 2014; RUIZ; MORENO, 2000). It is important to note that this stage is a cycle of building university identity,

recognizing the status of the profession and its gains and impacts on teaching, research, extension and management (BORGES; TAUCHEN, 2019). The authors emphasize that teaching may not be a novelty for some professors entering higher education, as they may present professional experiences in basic education. But there are novelties in the context of performance and in the demands of the organizational culture that, consequently, teachers are not absent from experiencing “a set of tensions and contradictions when starting their activities” (BORGES; TAUCHEN, 2019, p. 289).

Therefore, it is seen that the professor at the beginning of a university career will be able to mobilize skills and competences acquired through life, in a personal and professional scope. The literature points out that teachers seek, in their experiences as students, several methodologies on how to teach students, in addition to presenting training and pedagogical needs (CUNHA, 2014). Most of them build their own styles, experience professional loneliness and have difficulties in insertion in the institutional culture (SOARES, 2019); thus, it is essential to analyze the training and pedagogical practice of beginning teachers through records focused on memories, memories and images, as know-how, with regard to teacher learning it is not an action disconnected from the experiences lived in circumscribed situations. In addition, “higher education is based on the dynamics of the interaction of different processes that support the way teachers conceive the knowledge, do, teaching, and learning, as well as the meaning they give to these elements” (ISAIA, 2006, p. 74).

In this line of reasoning, this study comes from the following questions: Who are the beginning teachers at the university? How did they arrive and how do they constitute teaching at the beginning of their careers in higher education? How do the images and representations of the life stories cross their memories in the formation of professional identity? Thereby, our general objective is to analyze the memories reference beginners teachers in university teaching, as a knowledge resource to the themselves and understanding of their own identity. It is expected that the considerations listed in this text may contribute to the studies on the subject, specifically with early-stage teachers and their life stories as a framework for thinking of to be and being a teacher.

## **Memory and identity**

Memory has been the subject of several national and international studies, mainly in the field of social history. Records of reminiscences gain

new meanings or experiences that weave the subject's life history, that is, although memory presents individual aspects permanently, it is permeated by collective elements, which characterizes it as a social phenomenon, because "the feelings of memories, even personal ones, are always explained by the changes that take place in our relations with the different collective environments" (HALBWACHS, 2003, p. 69).

According to the author, even individual memories are interwoven with collective memories, since the reminiscences of individuals are fragments of experiences and experiences in family or social groups. In this sense, the meanings attributed by the subject to a fact are configured as a sum of experiences in which it is or has been inserted. The memories are not homogeneous or neutral, but rather reinterpretations of that individual's perceptions of what happened, "subjected to constant fluctuations, transformations and changes" (POLLAK, 1992, p. 201). This is due to the fact that memory is a "socially and individually constructed phenomenon" (POLLAK, 1992, p. 204), since, consciously or not, the person can alter, exclude and/or recall parts of the events he sees as coherent to be narrated in the present.

Through the studies of social psychology, Pollak (1992) argues that memory constitutes identity, since one can think about images, representations and meanings that the subject realizes about oneself and the others throughout life. Thus, both identity and memory become an element of power "that is produced in reference to others, in reference to the criteria of acceptability, admissibility, credibility, and that is done through direct negotiation with others" (POLLAK, 1992, p. 204). In this way, both aspects are continuous phenomena of reconstruction and meaning about what was lived, that is, "the memory and identity intertwine inseparable, reinforce each other from the moment of its emergence until its inevitable dissolution" (CANDAU, 2019, p. 19).

Through the lens of the past, the subject constructs the image of itself and the others in a process marked by a game of (de)organization, as a means of validating or refuting a satisfactory image of itself and for the other. Meanwhile, the teacher identity is constructed from social relations, socialization with the subjects, teaching practices, images and narratives produced along the life history of this professional. Although Diniz-Pereira (2014) emphasizes, in the text "*Professores(as): identidades forjadas*", that identity is a controversial topic in the contemporary world, mainly due to conceptual limitations and methodological difficulties, it is defended, in the light of (self) biographical studies, that identity constitutes a process of construction and reframing in space-times.

## The (auto)biographical research on education

(Auto)biographical research has been carried out in recent years in several areas of knowledge. In the educational area, several work approaches are observed, such as the international contributions of Nóvoa (1992), with the book “*Vida de Professores*”; the works of Josso (2010), with narratives of oneself and walking towards oneself; Dellory-Momberger (2006), with the production of biographical workshops; Dominicé (2010) with the use of educational biography, among others that expand some methodological dimensions about life history, training and professional development of subjects beyond the data collection instrument - in these writings are verified stories of life aspects as research and training process.

In view of this, the narrative is understood not as an information channel for collecting data from an investigative process with/about teachers, but as a resource for learning and identities affirmation, from the perspective of the subjects who attribute senses and meanings of the experiences constructed. This corroborates the assumptions of Benjamin (1994), for whom the narrative keeps marks of the life trajectories experienced by the narrator, whether from its own memory or from others, heard from narrators on the trips taken by this subject.

Other investigative contributions at national level were produced by Souza (2008), with his own narratives and writings; Passeggi (2010), about narrative writing; Abrahão (2018), about epistemological aspects; Guimarães (2006), on teachers’ oral life history; and Bragança (2012), with meta-narrative research on teachers’ life stories. In this understanding, it is evident that the epistemic-methodological aspects of the studies have been thought from the teachers and students experiences. In addition, it is clear the potential of teachers (re)frame the production of meanings and the existentiality through narrative exercise.

Nevertheless, studies that adopt the (auto)biographical approach as an epistemic-methodological principle present several resources for the (re) construction of subjects’ life stories, such as interviews, training circles, diaries, letters, memorials, photographs and drawings. Researchers have experienced research-training courses on the constitution of teaching beyond the curricular matrices of training courses and, at the same time, teachers experience processes of knowing themselves and the other, alternating between elements of life history and professional paths (SOARES, 2019).

The (auto)biographical narrative exercise is a singular-plural moment in studies with teachers, once, most of the time, the narrative training experiences, consciously or not, become significant elements in the understanding of the

constitution of teaching practice. In this case, “training can be considered as an action of an institution, as a set of the modalities of this action, as an exhortation action or as an activity proper to the person” (JOSSO, 2010, p. 37).

In this way, the narrative act as knowledge of oneself provides teachers the understanding, from life stories, important marks and meanings that constituted (and constitute) their personal and professional identity, as well as self-understanding about what they lived, in addition to encounters with their past experiences reframed in the present. The knowledge of oneself benefits the teacher through the paths of formation, interwoven by the symbolic web of individual and collective relationships and articulated “to know oneself as another” (ABRAHÃO, 2018, p. 25).

## **Methodological design**

The methodological approach adopted for the development of this study was the (auto) biographical method research. Such an option is justified, in the research with life history, “by taking a more detached and shrewd look at their past, teachers have the opportunity to redo their own paths, and these analysis prove to be fertile for the establishment of training practices” (BUENO, 1998, p. 15). The narrated experiences become sources of rich and living knowledge of a people, a human and/or culture, once, unlike information that has value only in the present time, the narrative is renewed and reproduced in a space-time. Thus, the narrative is not “interested in transmitting the pure thing narrated itself as an information or a report. It immerses the thing in the narrator’s life and then removes it from him” (BENJAMIN, 1994, p. 205).

The data were produced through the narrative interview (GUIMARÃES, 2006), organized around questions about the life history; school, academic and professional trajectories of three beginning teachers in federal universities in two Brazilian states. The participants’ selection took into account the experience in teaching at the university, the performance in the campuses selected for research, in addition to the interest and participation in all stages of the research, especially the interview, transcription and texts textualization.

In the meantime, the process of analyzing the data in the narratives took place under the comprehensive-interpretative bias (SOUZA, 2004) by means of more significant excerpts in the narratives as a reference. Three areas emerged in the analysis of the teachers’ reference memories were selected: a) family influence in the professional choice; b) schooling experiences; c)

undergraduate and graduate courses; and d) images from the beginning of university teaching. The biographical profiles of the professors are presented below using pseudonyms, to preserve their personal identities, in addition to being an ethical commitment of the research, according to the acceptance term signed by the study collaborators.

TABLE 1 – TEACHER’S BIOGRAPHICAL PROFILE

Professor	Gender	Age	Workplace	Education	Teaching time	Teaching course
Regina	F	37 years old	Rondônia	Doctorate	3 years	Countryside Education
Ellen	F	39 years old	Tocantins	Masters	2 years	Education
Arnaldo	M	50 years old	Tocantins	Doctorate	4 years	History

SOURCE: Authors preparation based on the research database (2018).

## Family influence in the professional choice

According to the professors’ narratives, it is noticeable that the choice for the teaching carrier was linked to the family’s influence, and the professors’ reference memories are built by experiences back in childhood. According to Regina, the desire for teaching runs through her life trajectory, in which the construction of the image of “being a teacher” is restricted, initially, to the context of basic education, particularly due to the experiences lived in childhood (DUBAR, 2005). The post-graduate itinerary leads her to insert herself professionally via public examination; consequently, the images of the profession are expanded along the formative paths experienced by her (BUENO, 1998).

*I was ... evaluating, today, like ... My childhood dream, even because we grew up at a school, we played with mimeograph, the old school material used to be donate to my house, chair, blackboard, chalk.... so we always played school. And I dreamed of being a teacher, but at basic education. I never thought of being a professor at the University, but suddenly I found myself taking a master’s degree, which seemed like a natural thing to do, a doctorate too, but I had nnever imagined that I would be a university professor (Professor Regina).*



Through the teacher's childhood memories, her identification and interest follow the teaching carrier are seen, and confirmed by the family influence, especially by her mother. This aspect was also narrated by Ellen, in which she points her mother as a figure of incentive to start her teaching career. In this sense, the interviewee's insertion in education is constructed as a temporal experience, as teaching appears in their life story as a "test" element, in which it is possible to remain or give up in the profession (CAVACO, 1991; BRAGANÇA, 2012).

Ellen emphasized that the influence to become a professor was based on formative itineraries that made it possible to understand the different learning styles that permeate the profession. For Tardif (2014), the images constructed by teachers about teaching and pedagogical practice result, in most cases, from the diverse knowledge experienced and apprehended throughout the life. For his part, Arnaldo narrated that the experiences with his sister, during childhood and adolescence, were one of the determining factors for professional choice. In general, it is clear that the act of playing, specifically about be and being a teacher, has become a time-space for these professionals to follow the path of teaching (ABRAHÃO, 2011).

*My family did influenced the choice for teaching. I think, mainly, my sister, because I remember that when my sister taught in this rural school, she always, she was always very good at delegating. And before that, when I was a child, she always liked it, always thought about being a teacher, my father bought it, bought a chalkboard and then, in those children's games, as she was older, I was obliged to play as her student. So, even without wanting to, I was obliged (Professor Arnaldo).*

It is aligned with other studies, when points that the playing "school" and the role of "teacher" have become, in the lives of teachers, one of the paths of education and self-knowledge. These reminiscences appear as formative evidence of identities, full with images about the school and its functioning, which demonstrates "the different records that go through the formation, that guide and operate choices, and reinvent the experienced and recover it's intensity" (ROCHA; SOUZA, 2013, p. 184). The data found are similar to other studies, such as Cunha (2014), when verifying the influences of family and social bonds, as well as values, behaviors and positive images presented as forming experiences by beginning teachers' narratives.

## Schooling experiences

Teacher education took place in different spaces and times. Permanent aspects in their narratives were the dimensions experienced in the teaching and learning process, especially in the memories and what they remember from former teachers and their training practices (DOMINICÉ, 2010; JOSSO, 2010). Through Ellen's memories, the reference-memories of schooling are woven by formative experiences lived with a professor dear to her. The relationship built between them in the course of their life history was strengthened in the training and professional process, once she invited that professor to give a lecture in the class she taught at the university.

At this point, we look back to the ideas of Castanho (2006), for whom there are several remarkable and unforgettable characteristics of teachers, especially the relationship what concerns personal and professional live. The author stresses that, in addition to master its area, the teacher need to have a human and dialogical stance with the students, when overcoming the barriers of teaching as mere transmission. Ellen also records the experiences with the History curriculum component (GUIMARÃES, 2006), in which the professor of this discipline required quantitative skills on the contents studied. This narrative also encompasses the difficulties experienced in the school access, mobility and permanence.

In a descriptive way, there is an implicit reflection on the valorization of students of that time for their studies in relation to the majority of nowadays' students, who have access and conditions for a better school education, but do not recognize or value them, a point referred by Soares (2019) in research with beginning teachers. This can also be justified in another study with teachers at the beginning of the profession, prepared by Almeida, Pimenta and Fusari (2019, p. 203), who assert that:

[...] the teaching profession has been victimized by the growing loss of social status, a phenomenon that has its greatest expression in low wages; this is the main factor pointed out by the graduating teachers as responsible for the lack of identification with the profession.

Meanwhile, Arnaldo, when narrating about schooling, attributes meanings to former teachers as reference-memories. Didactic-methodological dimensions

of these professionals marked his trajectory in life and profession as examples to be followed, especially, by the rigor of human and critical training.

*There was a Math teacher that I looked up to a lot. I think I even taught myself more about how to teach than many at the university. So, he was a teacher who had a very nice relationship with the students, very respectful, but affectionate. There was another teacher too, the strictness she had, Mrs. Nelma, which I have, wow, a great admiration for her. I always see, even today. And she was very careful. So I remember that, for example, she collected the notebooks, and if you forgot an punctuation, she would cross it. This helped me, she was strict, but, nothing disrespectful (Professor Arnaldo).*

Arnaldo found, in these subjects, a greater understanding of the know-how in teaching than during undergraduate course. However, it is not possible to deny the other socio-historical constraints that, permanently or not, cross the choice and images about teaching (NÓVOA, 1992).

## **Paths on undergraduate and post-graduate courses**

The undergraduate and graduate courses of the trainers were marked by challenges, possibilities and discoveries that contributed directly and indirectly to their constitution as teachers. According to Regina, entering the undergraduate course was marked by doubts and discoveries, especially about what concerns what was prescribed and what was experienced during the course. In Ellen's narrative, differently from Regina's memories, the path in undergraduate course is due to personal and professional needs, especially the insertion and permanence in teaching, once she had, at the time of graduation, experience as a teacher in basic education. Even with this trajectory, Ellen intended to seek other training to meet the demands experienced in teaching practice.

Arnaldo demonstrated that the training process in the undergraduate program combined work and study. A reference from this period concerns the difficulties of access to the institution, as the narrative remarks the substantial value of the course, against the challenges and desire to overcome them. Although the narratives present singularities of life, the undergraduate course

was a reference for access to knowledge and critical training, given the life conditions of each subject.

What concerns post-graduate studies, the collaborators' narratives agree to think this level of education as an expansion of knowledge and professional rise, such as access to university teaching, although this process was different for Regina, since those were a consequence of the years of studies. For Ellen, this path was a need to deepen knowledge, with formative gaps to meet professional demands in the field of teaching.

In these terms, Arnaldo pointed that the entry into the master's degree and, mainly, in the doctorate, comes from the precariousness experienced in teaching. The narrative addresses several dilemmas experienced by teachers in the context of basic education – such as students' indiscipline, political implications, students' lack of interest, difficulties in socializing among peers, personal and professional devaluation, lack of a career plan and perspective of change - when finding in the post-graduation, the paths of appreciation and professional growth, in addition to contributing to the training of new teachers in undergraduate courses. Such point is aligned with the research carried out by André and Almeida (2017), however the authors state that difficulties experienced by teachers at school directly impact the professional practice of trainers, such as lack of motivation and interest of undergraduate students, due to the lack of professional and social appreciation of teaching.

## **Images of the beginning of university teaching**

The admission of professors to the university was marked as a singular personal and professional phase (BOZU, 2010). In the narratives, our collaborators listed experiences related to joys, discoveries and insecurity, especially when dealing with pedagogical issues and the development of skills to deal with the diversity of adult education (PIMENTA; ANASTASIOU, 2008). In this sense, the beginning of university teaching is characterized by a phase of their professional cycle as an important time-space in the formation and construction of the professor's identity. However, this beginning of the profession does not occur in a vacuum, but permeated with memories, images and representations apprehended by professor's throughout their life history. Regina, emphasized that the social role played by the profession in her own memories, and at the university, it is much more than a public office, as it constitutes a

banner of struggle in defense of education as a social right, especially with her participation in social movements.

According to Pimenta and Anastasiou (2008, p. 79), “the teaching work is impregnated with intentionality, as it aims at human formation through content and skills, thought and action, which implies choices, values, ethical commitments”. In other words, the pedagogical practice is not a neutral action, as it is crossed by values, beliefs and desires, elements that constitute the teacher’s identity. Ellen pointed concern about organizing the university class, as a “debut” moment in higher education. It is possible to analyze the professional stance assumed by the professor also in the first steps of the profession, by highlighting the didactic test of a public exam for a teacher of higher education, which requires candidates to master the content, skills and organization of the teaching process.

*In fact, I was even a little anxious about working in higher education. It was the same as when I went to the public exam didactics test. The first thing I thought about organizing my class was towards the public, now I am working with higher education, the student profile will be different (Professor Ellen).*

Arnaldo mentioned memories about the first moment as a professor at university, he remembered the feeling of anxiety and professional affirmation in towards to the master of the action to be proposed to the class. Despite this, he reported difficulties in occupying the former professor’s space at the class and demonstrated previous knowledge on how to face such a situation. In the case of those narratives, when analyzing other researches in the field, such as the study by Wiebusch (2016) with bachelor’s and undergraduate professors, it was evident that a large part of the professors, regardless of their education, find it difficult to understand the processes of organizational and pedagogical culture in this beginning of their career. However, in the face of institutional requirements (theoretical or practical classes), taking their own experiences, professors seek to build didactic planning, mainly with videos, images, articles or other pedagogical instruments that are already part of the memories about teaching.

In another research, Monteiro (2016, p. 119) pointed out the formative limitations of teachers beginning in higher education, specifically “when teaching how to be a teacher, when teaching how to teach”. For the author, the difficulties result from the training itineraries experienced by the researched professors, which indicates the importance of the pedagogical-institutional accompaniment

programs for beginning trainers, in order to overcome or reduce the training limitations in the field of the didactic and curricular processes of the different courses at the university.

The reports, some parts of them, indicates that the difficulties experienced in the teaching practice by the trainers are sometimes shared with more experienced professors or they observe, in the practice of these professionals, the construction of their didactics. These “mentors” become references in order to reduce the difficulties experienced in teaching, even with the classroom trajectory, which reinforces the ideas of Pimenta and Anastasiou (2008) about the constitution of the teaching being, in addition to being a differential that points to professional loneliness as a characteristic of the beginning of a career (ALMEIDA; PIMENTA; FUSARI, 2019; CUNHA, 2014; BOZU, 2010).

Even with professional experience and training courses, professors seek in experiences the construction of professional practice as one more reference, by assigning meanings to think about the profession and project life in the present (TARDIF, 2014). Elements of memory are woven into the constitution of the teacher’s identity as a result of reminiscences and memories of what has been lived. At the same angle, teachers weave theoretical and methodological options according to their experiences as undergraduate and graduate students, in addition to their own practice with the students’ knowledge, when they find references for the preparation of didactic proposals in higher education.

Bolzan and Powaczuk (2019, p. 87), states that higher education professors make theoretical and pedagogical choices according to their own training in specific areas, which emphasizes the relevance of understand continuing education beyond the concrete reality. The authors highlight the difficulties faced by the professors in the Exact and Technological areas to deal with pedagogical issues, since the training trajectories, most of the time, do not include the knowledge of teaching - this profession requires self-awareness, “a process that involves breaks and a willingness to undertake new training investments”. The teaching process requires, in addition to specific knowledge, a permanent and interdisciplinary mobilization of the knowledge produced by humanity. Memories about the trainers’ organizational culture were addressed in the development of their own professional practice, as administrative and pedagogical rites are remembered as new, confusing and learning elements:

*I feel that we fall, the institution is here to be built. Even on the day of our inauguration, the dean said: “you are not coming to the universities that you graduated”. I already knew, once I have several friends who are professor, I knew that we deal with a lot. In addition to our difficulties,*

*there are administrative needs, in short, to structure the university, the bureaucracy* (Professor Regina).

In this point, the trainers highlighted issues in the courses' curriculum, such as students' profile and the reality observed in the classroom, which indicates a challenge in the beginning of teaching (ANDRÉ; ALMEIDA, 2017). Many curricula were developed by veteran professors and demanded beginners understanding of the guidelines ratified by the collective.

Curricular issues can be the focus of new investigations on the challenge of the profession in the university, notably in the curricular reforms of undergraduate courses, such as the draft for the “*Base Nacional da Formação de Professores da Educação Básica*” (National Base for the Training of Teachers of Basic Education), which is not alligned with the historical advances of the teacher training as *Resolução* CNE/CPn° 02/2015 (BRASIL, 2015), manifested by the Teacher Training working group (GT8) of the National Association of Graduate Studies and Research in Education - Brazil (ANPEd)<sup>3</sup>.

In this way, professors' narratives about the beginning of teaching in higher education are permeated by values, concepts and conceptions that they bring with them throughout their own life history. In the reports, there is a strong emotional charge and responsibility in the face of their positions as professors, that is, they understand the importance of their role, particularly in relation to the organizational culture, when they demarcate elements that constitute professionalism from reference memories. The beginning of teaching is referred to as a time to learn and organize the university's administrative and pedagogical processes, especially how to deal with the challenges of the profession beyond the classroom.

The trainers participated in commissions as their first professional experience at the university, which required unite professional knowledge about teaching, research, extension and management, that is, thinking and experiencing the teaching profession beyond teaching. Thus, the professors reported feelings of fear, anxiety and nervousness in the face of the new, although, for many, teaching was not something new, but the context of it. It is possible to notice a profile of overcoming, mainly in relation to life history and expectations as teachers in higher education. They stated that, despite the difficulties, they intend to pursue a career in higher education as a permanent process of training and professional development.

3 Available at: <http://www.anped.org.br/news/manifesto-gt-08-e-anped-parecer-cne-para-bnc-formacao-continuada>. Access in: 20 jun 2020.

Therefore, professors' memories confirm several experiences that cross their trajectories as formative elements of life and profession. Professors build new meanings about experiences according to personal demands and desires in the first steps of the profession at the university. In this case, they, in movements of doubts and discoveries, show attitudes to change reality, particularly in the classroom, in which the lack of basic knowledge formation hinders students' academic success.

The experiences as teachers of basic education, although reduced, referenced and differentiated the pedagogical practice in the undergraduate courses they teach, mainly in relation to the course and the students' profile, besides pedagogical planning, a significant issue in teaching construction. This is also essential for proposing new studies that intend to reflect on the professional knowledge derived from basic education, together with the training of new teachers in undergraduate courses. The investigated professors rethink and reconstruct the beginning of teaching linked to experiences, by valuing them as marks in the constitution of changing, dynamic, social and intersubjective pedagogical practice, and not as a fixed and unique process.

## **Final considerations**

The study revealed, through the life history of three professors at the beginning of their career at the university, significant elements about memory, training, identity and teaching. We have evidenced that many elements narrated are forgotten or omitted, in most cases, from teacher training courses, in particular the experiences lived throughout the professors' lives, as alternatives for knowing themselves and the other. Doubt, insecurity and discoveries were recalled as elements that portray the beginning of teaching at the university.

The process of learning to teach wasn't neutral, it was woven by the training courses experienced by professors throughout their life as well as training and professional courses, in order to maintain or overcoming beliefs and values about the teaching profession. We also observed evidence of other memories present in the their memories, such as the didactic and curricular processes of their former teachers, as a way of thinking about the school today and identities as professors.

The reference-memories helped to narrate and describe the learning processes as marks of experiences built in their life stories. In other words, through the reference-memories, the subjectivities that permeate the construction



of the professors' identity were visualized, that is, how professors were constituted in the different historical and educational contexts.

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