

Teaching Identities in an Elite State School in Portugal

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ABSTRACT – Teaching Identities in an Elite State School in Portugal. This article applies Claude Dubar's thesis to discuss the professional identities of eight teachers at a state school in Lisbon. In this case study, carried out in 2017-2018, the data collection involved life story interviews and questionnaires around social, economic and cultural issues. The analysis of *biographical identity* shows a trajectory of teachers who studied in state schools, who considered themselves dedicated and demanding, and who have had a solid academic background in their professional development. *Identity for the others* shows that the group is seen as active and devoted by the community and has developed personal styles of teaching. The *relational identity* reveals a teaching exercise focused on educating young people from the upper-middle class to higher education.

Keywords: Teaching Identities. State School. Case Study.

RESUMO – Identidades Docentes numa Escola Pública de Elite Portuguesa. Este artigo versa sobre as identidades profissionais de oito professores de uma escola básica pública lisboeta, à luz da tese de Claude Dubar. No estudo de caso, realizado em 2017-2018, a coleta de dados foi feita via entrevistas na linha de história de vida e questionários sobre aspectos sociais, econômicos e culturais. A análise da *identidade biográfica* mostra uma trajetória de professores que estudaram em escolas públicas, consideram-se dedicados e exigentes, além de que tiveram uma sólida formação profissional acadêmica. A *identidade para o outro* mostra que o grupo é tido como ativo e empreendedor pela comunidade e desenvolveu estilos pessoais de ensinar. A *identidade relacional para si* revela um exercício da docência focado na instrução de jovens da classe média-alta para o ensino superior. **Palavras-chave: Identidades Docentes. Escola Básica. Estudo de Caso.**

Introduction

It is said that we live in a time of great changes and uncertainties. The school, as it has been officially established, from the second half of the XVIII century on, has its days numbered (Nóvoa, 1991; 2017). Teaching, on one hand, must be considered as the most important among all professions, simply because teachers are the major piece in the development of all other professionals in contemporary societies. On the other hand, the profession has been constantly undervalued by society, alongside the legitimacy crisis the *school of uncertainties* (Canário, 2005) is going through. Marked by ambiguity, heterogeneity and diversity, the teacher's craft in contemporary school faces challenges, like the profession's intensification and complexity and the diversification of teacher's chores caused by a set of social, political and economic transformations (Lelis, 2012). The theme is fruitful among academic studies, be it because of its centrality or complexity, by the inexistence of a consensus regarding the question, or, yet, as revealing of how much the profession is usually silenced by governors and specialists. (Xavier, 2014).

This article is a part of a case study, conducted between 2017 and 2018, and it seeks to map teaching identities and the relationships that Brazilian and Portuguese teachers working in state schools established with knowledge¹. It explores a few aspects of eight Portuguese teachers' identity constructions, through life story interviews as well as questionnaires around social, economic and cultural issues, carried prior to the interviews.

Still about the methodological path, I considered, using Ferrarotti (1998), that a biographic approach was, in this case, the most appropriate methodological strategy, since it could supply a social interpretation, at the same time sheltering each person's specificities. For the interviews, conducted in a private room inside the Lisbon school, I took with me a script containing questions that versed in family, school and professional trajectories of the teachers.

The full data analysis was conducted based on Claude Dubar's (2000) professional identities theory, to whom the identity is the result of diverse socialization processes (at the same time, stable/provisional, individual/collective, subjective/objective, biographical/structural) that, in conjunction, build the individuals and define institutions (Dubar, 2005).

In this line of investigation, whether considering the personal and subjective disposition of teaching, the investigation crosses references from the teachers' life stories (Huberman, 2007) with their professional development in the school culture. It's about understanding to which degree the negotiations around the professional identity construction may reveal less explored aspects regarding social interactions and their symbolic dimensions, as well as political embarrassments that permeate this professional group's identity dynamics.

The social processes constituting the identities of eight teachers² from a secondary school in the city of Lisbon³ are described and ana-

lysed, both in their private and public scopes, along with their relations with *biographical identity*, *identity towards others* and *relational identities*. The theory regarding the identity negotiation process will be presented at first, mainly through Dubar's theories about identity, together with other authors who think about identity, school and teaching.

Afterwards, teacher's biographical identity will be described. The relation between the teacher's personal and professional life has been used to better understand the significances of their work in individual trajectories since, in the 1990's, António Nóvoa noticed an impossibility to separate the "personal and the professional me, especially in a profession so highly impregnated with values and ideals and very demanding of effort and human relations" (Nóvoa, 1992, p. 9).

The institutional process, which is public, therefore, the subject's identities construction comes in sequence and will be followed by the last axis of the paper, the relational identity for yourself.

The Identity Negotiation Process in Question

I am three hundred, three hundred and fifty, but one day
after all I will run into me.

[Eu sou trezentos, sou trezentos-e-cinquenta, mas um dia
afinal eu toparei comigo] (Mário de Andrade, 1995, p. 221).

There are several reasons why the study of identities has come to occupy an important place in the social sciences. Deep and complex transformations arose in discourse from several areas – social cultural, political, economic, and try in some way to shape and name to ever more fluid, imprecise and fleeting experiences lived by a subject whose identity is in constant shift, no longer being considered fixed, essential or permanent – as the poet Mário de Andrade stated in the above sentence in 1929.

In this way, the confrontation with the overwhelming plethora of options and lifestyles or the speed with which discourses and images travel and disappear worldwide leads to a continual effort to rebuild day to day life in local and global terms, and to a difficulty to register in the memory, causing the so called identitarian crisis and shattering of the modern individual (Castells, 2000; Hall, 2003). To Bauman (2000), the pursuit for identity in the "fluid modern society" is an unceasing quest to stop or slow the flow, to solidify the liquid, shape the shapeless, since contemporary identities, even though they look solid and steady, when glanced at from the outside, are, actually, volatile and unstable. Hall (2003) would have said to Mário de Andrade that a complete, unified and coherent identity is merely a product of "a comfortable story about ourselves or a comforting 'self-narrative'" (Hall, 2003, p. 13) and should be seen as a cultural fantasy.

However, among several approaches, in this study the identity is considered as a social and cultural construction developed in the context, not being possible to define it merely by biological or individual

and internal factors. In this way, the *sociological subject's* (Hall, 2003) identity is formed in mediation with the environment he/she inhabits, being developed and modified in the nonstop dialogue with the other identities on the social world. In this subjectivity's construction from the other, another crucial aspect is given by Bakhtin (1992), to whom all discourse evokes other discourses and discursive practices, which highlights the *myself* polyphonic character and the notion of otherness⁴.

According to those perspectives, the construction of the identity is a continuous process of articulation between the individual with the intersubjective, the *myself* (or *myselfs*) with the *others*, in which the private and public instances meet in a constant dialogue, as Dubar does (2005). When analysing the professional identities' formation, the author takes special interest in the intersection between the public and private spheres in work contexts, by understanding that these domains are at stake in the process of professional identity construction. To him, there is an encounter among two heterogeneous processes: one social process that attributes identities by the other subjects and by the institution, which can be analysed in this system of action; another process, a private one, lived by the individual himself, which incorporates their identities during his life trajectory (*active interiorization*, in which there is a subjective transition between the inherited and targeted identities, between past and future). Dubar introduces the subjective dimension in the sociological analysis, when postulates the existence of a subjective movement (*identity for yourself*), meaning, which identity I claim as my own when in front of others, and in another movement, intersubjective (*identity for the other*), meaning, how the others perceive me.

This intersubjective movement (named *objective transaction*) concerns itself with the trajectory through the public world and involves a series of assignments – such as name, numbers, social class, gender, profession, ethnicity, passwords, bank account, access to the internet, virtual community profile-, which differentiate, categorize and position us. It is important to observe that in this public sphere force and power relationships occur, and the possibility of discrimination and all types of stereotypes. This *objective transaction* movement dialogues at all times (not always in agreement), with the *inherited and targeted identities*, build with our life trajectories as a base, that make up our biography (*subjective transaction*). This dialogue between movements is called identity negotiation, “[...] a complex communicative process, irreducible to an authoritarian ‘labelling’ of pre-defined identities with individual trajectories as a base” (Dubar, 2005, p. 141). The author sees in this two transaction's intersection the key to the social identity constitutive dynamics and presents them by discriminating their categories in this way⁵:

Figure 1 – Theory Summary

RELATIONAL PROCESS Public social process (institucional)	BIOGRAPHIC PROCESS Private social process (individual)
“Identity for the others”	“Identity for yourself”
“Attribution acts” (as others see me)	“Belonging acts” (how I say I am/want to be perceived)
“Attributed identity” (name, social class, gender, profession, ethnicity etc)	“Predicative identity” (claimed belonging)
Objective transactions (intersubjective) (between attributed identities and as- sumed identities)	Subjective transactions (between established identities and targeted identities)
Relational and social experience of power	Social stratification, discrimination and inequality experiences

Source: Dubar (2005).

In the matter of the institutional aspect (therefore, public) in the teacher’s identity construction, it should be taken into consideration the consequences of the *institution’s decline* (Dubet, 2002) for the actor’s identities when they perform a *work on others* (teachers, nurses, social workers, for example). According to the author, with contemporary societies’ crisis, institutions have lost their monopolies and their image was destabilized. In the professional scope, traditional identity, lined with homogenic values and supplied by the *institutional programme*⁶, gave place to identities acquired through an infinity of roles and of experience ruptures in life. In this strand, the professionals’ challenge is to live without being rooted to a homogeneous stock of identities and values (stock that, beforehand, gave a role and function for them at the institution) and creating their own strategies while managing interpersonal relationships.

In this way, the individual, seeing itself fractured, is forced to use autonomous logics, often opposing, and still having to place themselves in multiple rationalities (in culture, production, citizenship), in a never-ending self-construction. And it is in this permanent construction where, for Dubet, lies the biggest problem for individuals, because the social actor has to construct itself as a subject, more than simply articulate different social spheres, as Dubar thinks.

How do the teachers that work in the Portuguese public basic school develop these strategies and manage the institutional relations? Which of their biographic processes’ characteristics were fundamental to the constitution of their professional identities? How those identities express themselves in actions and attributions at the school and in the styles of teaching they develop?

The Biographic Identity for Oneself: demanding and dedicated teachers, a solid academic formations and personalized teaching styles developed

The analysis here focus itself on the biographic process in its communal characteristics to the majority of teachers, seeking to understand how the identification process of the studied teachers took place for them to become teachers: how their communal professional and ethical principles are developed, their choice of the profession, early years in practice as well as singular and personal styles.

The table below introduces the subjects, the subjects they teach and for how long they have taught. It is known that the subject taught is a fundamental factor to professional identity affirmation. In this logic, it is possible to state that those disciplinary knowledges are reinterpreted by each teacher in their own way, from the framework of their life story and day-to-day work, by the relationship with their students, developing, in this manner, the so called *identity for yourself* by Dubar (2005). Also, all teachers have between 29 and 40 years of teaching in the Portuguese basic school, which qualifies them to be categorized as experienced teachers.

Figure 2 – List of Subjects⁷

Subject	Subject Taught	Years of profession/ Years at the school
Rick	Mathematics	30 /28
Gustavo	History	32/13
Oriana	English	29/17
Mocho	Biology	40/40
Maria	Physics-Chemistry	36/23
Jos	Physical Education	38/28
Ana	Geography	34/10
Rosa	Portuguese	32/13

Source: Elaboração da autora.

The first traces of the teachers' personalities, the values and even the moral duty were learned from the parents and grandparents, in the socialization process that Arroyo (2007) calls *stage-contagion between humans*. Four of the eight teachers are daughters of teachers, which certainly influenced the professional choice. The remainder are sons and daughters of housewives, a public worker, a banker, a mechanic, a trader, a lawyer, a commercial manager and a fishing devoted, belonging, according to the teachers, to the middle and upper-middle class (Gustavo believes he belongs to the lower middle-class concerning money and the upper middle-class concerning knowledge).

Arroyo (2007) reminds us that in Brazil both the female gender as well as the class origin influence the choice and the identification with teaching, which seems to be the reality in this group: Ana, Geo-

graphy teacher, says that “the teachers of the family (grandmother, mother, cousins and aunts) were very dedicated” e she was only in doubt whether to teacher Biology or Geography; Mocho chose Biology in the last minute, but always wanted to be a teacher like his mother, just like Jos, who was also an athlete, but always wanted to teach; Maria, Chemistry and Physics teacher, remembers how much she wanted to teach ever since elementary school and how “ever since a little girl I had a huge tendency towards numbers and I thought it was delightful to solve mathematic problems to be entertained when sick”. On the other hand, Gustavo claims to have had a passion for History since little, but thought to be a journalist and a researcher, just like Oriana, who wanted to be a writer, and Rosa, a judge. Still in this matter, Rick became a Mathematics teacher *by chance* (he wanted to be a Portuguese Air Force pilot, but was rejected for *emotional instability*), but believed that he “[...] was lucky and that God choose it, because He knew that teaching would make me happy”.

The teachers have an age span between 46 and 61 years old, half of them are native to Lisbon city, Rick is from Caldas da Rainha, Jos was born in Algarve, Ana, in Porto, and Rosa, from Madeira Island. Still regarding to the inherited individual identity, the Portuguese teachers, after finding the question odd, classified themselves ethnically as white and/or Caucasians. Still in this matter, six subjects are Catholic (Rosa sees herself as a non-practicing Catholic) and Gustavo and Mocho said that they do not follow any religion.

Among the several biography conditioners to the teachers’ professional identities, they specially highlight many and unforgettable school experiences, either as students or as graduated teachers. Regarding schooling routes, constituents of the social identity, the images of former teachers are memorable and are revealed through the narrative. They speak of how they learned to be teachers from their older masters: subjects (Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Portuguese, Literature, English), work techniques (text productions, reflexions, among others), attitudes before students (demanding, authoritarian, more reflexing and instigator), century old marks of teaching. If with the family they say they learned ethical values, with former teachers they built professional capabilities, which, according to researches, are long-lasting through time and very little affected by academic formation (Tardif, 2002). However, not all subjects were aware of that, so much that with certain perplexity that Rick remembered, during the interview, of his former teacher Agostinho and his technique of, sitting the students in a U, to provide the theory and ask for opinions, moment in which he took out his glasses and made total silence, causing some embarrassment: “I do this all the time!”.

All the teachers studied in state schools, at least through high school. Of that time, beyond the memories of teachers that marked them positively, to the extent that they chose the profession – whether because they like the subject they taught, or because it stimulated reflexion and writing, as is Oriana’s case which, before becoming an English teacher, desired to be a writer, and today has as a fundamental work

activity the development of what she calls *creative writing* – there is also the case of the former teacher that “dumped school stuff and encouraged memorization”, a model that Gustavo tells he has always avoided.

Before going further, a note about the first years of teaching done by them, who had a solid academic formation, in their respective areas, some of them having master’s degrees (Gustavo, in Anthropology and Political Science; e Jos, in High Profit) and doctorate’s in Portuguese Studies (Rosa’s case).

It is a historical fact that the April’s Revolution was important in the political-ideological shift in Portugal, with consequences in education and in the curriculum, especially in the school’s democratization, which, with the mandatory schooling mechanism, sought to improve the Portuguese population’s qualification levels and assure quality of opportunities, in the school access and success (Pacheco; Souza, 2018). This reality fact along with the lack of teachers in post revolution Portugal forced the Biology and the Geography teachers to start teaching even before their graduation was completed, still as interns, which caused them great impact, facing that reality shock, as stated by the teacher Mocho: “My arrival to the school, very young, contrasted with the old crystalized teachers, from whom I received very little support”.

Despite the restrictive reality of most teaching internships in Portugal and Brazil – starting by the lack of articulation between university and school, along with several departments differences and a disarticulation between the internship’s modules and the students’ necessities, the lack of supervisors and of the short length of the internship (Flores, 2014) –, teacher Mocho completes her narrative: “From the internship, I have good memories, because I managed to overcome, through research, the lack of scientific and pedagogic knowledges”.

It is important to highlight that most teachers are aware that the biggest knowledge on how to be a teacher was acquired inside the school, but when they already worked. All of them claim to themselves an experienced and confident identity as teachers. Through this path, I question the idea of identity in a similar perspective as Tardif (2002), to whom teachers are what they are for doing what they do constantly. Therefore, personal teaching styles are created, and those projections deserve to be described, because they make up the identity for yourself.

Rick is a Mathematics teacher that claims to be especially interested in his student’s learning, which makes him committed, demanding and rigorous:

I try to come up with ways to say things differently, I try not to “give things with a kiss”, I try to insinuate them to bring questions. I change the pace of the class, stay quiet, as teacher Agostinho did, get the lead and say what I think. It is in the variety, the surprise and the flexibility that you can find adepts. The moral authority has to be earned. This has to be my trump: to conquer the authority, without imposing.

Gustavo, History, in its turn, considers himself *striking* and acknowledges he focuses on conducting the students’ analytical capability,

mobilized by documents analysis (maps, graphics, treaties) and then leads to questioning and invites to study. The teacher, that makes his class to be “[...] very audio-visual”, to attract attention, considers himself very up to date with world Geography, organized, an avid reader who brings multiple books to class. And finishes his belonging acts by stating: “I am political, because I call the students’ attention to the world’s political question. I am good at formatting students to achieve their goals, but I know that my route is not the only possible one and I respect when they achieve their goals for their own”.

Teacher Ana, Geography, also identifies herself with formality: “I abide to rules, from the way the desks should be placed”. Despite that, believing in empathy’s importance, she thinks she needs to change and be more caring, which demonstrate a clash between the teacher’s already built identity and the targeted one, within the subjective transaction process:

[...] there has to be some caring for learning to take place, a good work environment. The student learns and progresses better if he feels that there is a caring environment, if he feels dear. We have to exert authority, but we also cannot create some hostility.

The idea of the loving environment is brought in the same way by Maria, who claims to “[...] like people very much”, fundamental element of teaching Physics and Chemistry, added to curiosity, disposition (“I am not afraid to work”) and demand, personal characteristic that appears in Jos’ identity aspects, “the demanding” (“in the way of being in the classroom, of demanding respect, of knowing everything the students do at school”) and of Rosa, a teacher who claims to be authoritarian and likes to judge (perhaps for wanting to be a judge).

Another one of the group’s identity facet comes from Oriana, who considers herself to be creative and dynamic, even saying that she gets “desperate when a student doesn’t adhere” to her enthusiasm and passion for literature and cinema: “I am not very routine-like, I do various things (sometimes I change what I have planned), change strategies all the time and that is a lot of work!”.

Another one of the subjects’ acts of belonging appears with Mochó, a teacher who feels attentive and observing during classes, from where she claims to leave feeling fulfilled, but tired: “I used to be better than now. I lack an active old strength, important with kids. I used to be more dynamic, my classes had more pace, with more diversification of the motivation strategies”. It seems that this is a trace called teacher’s *burnout* (Esteve, 1995).

Still on this above-mentioned phenomenon, the teachers complain about the work overload, the excessive hours and the activities’ diversity (inside and outside of the classroom), but mainly about the assignments’ correction, a highly valued activity in a study continuation school: “the career is cruel to the teachers”, complains Maria. The fact can be interpreted, with the arguments of a critical analysis, done by Pacheco e Souza (2018), to whom the Portuguese school’s management

and administration's way is stuck within a "decreed autonomy" logic, at national level, an autonomy constructed based in the external assessment of the skills' learning. In this way, a pressure towards the teachers is installed to prepare their students to standardized tests.

And how will it be that, despite multiple external embarrassments, the subjects identify with the institution they work in? But, before, let us see which virtual social identities are bestowed to them by their students, peers and superiors.

The Identity for the Others: an experienced, confident, active and devoted team

[...] the task that proposed myself and for which I managed to gather a team with many years of professional experience, confident in the project, active and devoted, will only be achievable if we can count on your important collaboration, because it is in everyone's best interest that our school lives up to its history, its exceptional past, both in the students' and teachers' formation, being once acknowledged as one of the main high schools in Portugal and currently as a secondary school whose huge demand is, undoubtedly, also revealing of its enormous prestige (Principal's letter to parents, in July 2017, after being made principal).

The qualifiers chosen by the principal of the secondary school to its work team is a summary of big parts of the subjects' attributed identities: experienced, active and devoted. The positive qualities vary a little from each one, but, if I could bring the views in general without being afraid to miss, I would list that, according to the school community (students, peers, direction and ex-students' parents), the teachers are competent, because they prepare well their students to national exams, cultured, hardworking, dedicated, demanding of the teaching quality, seeking to contribute to the good results that guide the institution.

The most critical adjectives, negative and in fewer numbers are those that say that these school's teachers are elitists, don't question themselves, live non-diversified professional lives, are conservative, smug, even sloppy and dissimulated. But the most negative sentence about the teachers and the teaching came from a student: "you can see that they are teachers because they couldn't be anything else in life". It will be necessary to comment that this negative social view of teaching, coming from a student, has to do with the depreciation of the social status that, currently the most important profession has? (Nóvoa, 1991). Anyway, it is off with the majority of the group's and Ana's opinion, that states: "I have the best profession in the world, because I work with people, in a very good phase of their lives, in which they are full of tenacity!".

It is relevant to bring up that, with teacher Oriana's exception-that believes that their students find her dynamic and friendly-, the seven teachers believe that the students find them demanding, among other already mentioned characteristics. In this case, it seems to be a match between the attributed identity and the one assumed by the subjects.

The *Relational* Identity for Yourself: competent teachers, with *school sense*

This school is a national reference, with a long history, and in which outstanding figures have gone through, of public, cultural and political importance, whose mission is to prepare for the entrance in higher education courses. The school has a good organization, good management with supports to the teachers and it establishes efficient work groups. As it is a study continuation school, we don't prepare for jobs, but to get into good colleges (Teacher Rick).

The sentence said by Rick, Mathematics teacher, enlightens the “virtual” social identity that envelops all the studied teachers’ discourses. Identified with the type of school they work in, either, of preparing the young middle and upper-class of Lisbon to Higher education, these teachers define themselves from a work that is mainly towards instruction, as we can also see in the Geography teacher’s explanation of teaching: “the teacher is someone that knows how to help the student acquire the necessary skills in the study cycle, from knowledge and citizenship levels, it is someone that can make the student achieve their school goals”. In this same line of reasoning, to Gustavo, History and Political Science teacher, it is about a school in which it makes sense to invest in the students, because there is feedback and adhesion to the proposed activities, which makes him frequently achieve his educational goals.

In these times, it is important to remember that the Portuguese school is currently inserted in the accountability culture, curriculum alignment process, globally rethought by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (Pacheco; Souza, 2018). Therefore, the Portuguese national curriculum component, just like the Brazilian, is strongly determined by programs and by a new pedagogic view of objectives, to the development of skills, and curriculum goals. In this logic, teaching prefigures the search for success goals fulfilment, with emphasis to situations that privilege more technical and practical perspectives, in detriment to the cultural, political and social aspects of teaching (Nóvoa, 1991, 2017).

Although it is believed that a teacher have as a mission to teach general content to skills development, some subjects acknowledge that the objective of teaching nowadays goes beyond that, because the parents, with the new family and professional configurations, fail in the civic and social education, leaving to the school the job to educate. Most subjects complain about the “disrespectful attitudes, brought from home” with which the teachers, operators, managers and peers must deal with, and, moreover, educate to be good people (respect the differences, the space, the time, different opinions, responsibility and autonomy): “The teacher and school’s job is more complex than people think”, believes teacher Jos. This seems to reveal another facet of the aforesaid teacher’s burnout.

The same teacher, Jos, also states, that “being a teacher is complicated and magical, because we have to live with, at least, a hundred

students per year". The statement reminds us of the basic and inherent characteristic to an interactive profession such as teaching (Freire, 1997; Tardif, 2002) and makes us, to complete the *identities for the others*, talk about the representations that the teachers have of their students, because these are privileged subject when it comes to a relationship profession.

The subjects tell that their students live around the school, belonging to an elevated economic and cultural tier ("this school's migrant is the son of the ambassador", clarifies a teacher), which causes them to have multiple parallel private classes and, subsequently, a big structure and volume in the so-called cultural capital. This fact has some consequences in the teaching practice there. The first one is that, on one hand, that aids in the knowledge production or skills development work: they practice sports, have a good level in the Portuguese and English language, know many countries and cultures or even studied in good private schools. On the other hand, there is a reduction in the teacher's importance, what, however, does not make the Mathematics teacher, for example, feel *without responsibility*, since he still feels like "[...] the main conduit to teaching Mathematics". The *knowledge spokesperson*, as would say Michel Serres (2013), tells about how pleased he feels to be able to explore deeper contents, to explain abstractions, such as the concept of a variable, for example. And acknowledges that "[...] we can only explain something perfectly well if we take pleasure in transmitting that idea. I cannot sell a fish if I am not satisfied with it".

The identity that is explored here (identity to the others) is connected to the development (bigger or smaller) of a *school sense*, still according to teacher Rick, that translates into a persistent defence of the institution and in "[...] giving your best on behalf of the school community and not of this or that administration". He assesses that there are all types of teachers in that school: "50% have a school sense; 30% have already liked the profession at some point, but are tired and are only waiting to retire; 20% are negligent teachers, and do not take interest in the students".

This relations identity's aspect reminds of another one pointed as inherent to the teacher's identity and that appears in several academic papers related with teaching: the mediating identity in the teaching-learning process. The mediating identity is embodied by the fact that the teacher is taken as a social actor that transits between multiple sociocultural contexts and that establishes communication between different social groups, being even able to be an agent of transformation (Pimenta, 1997; Arroyo, 2007). In a study like this one, in an elite school, it can be said that the great bridge built by the teachers is the one that leads to the best Portuguese universities and to professional success.

Final Words

Re-born, he knows, has mercy, Finally, he can teach (Michel Serres, 1990, p. 155).

The case study about the teachers' identities of a Portuguese school reveals many aspects whether about the ambiguity, the heterogeneity or the complexification of the teacher's job in contemporaneity. It was possible to perceive the quest for meaning they undertake to live several *rebirths* or while having to realise, many times, that "there is nothing new beneath the Sun nor the Moon", as tells us the emperor Arlequin in Serres text, that introduces this study's end.

The biographic analysis reveals that the eight teachers studied at state schools before entering college and graduation and that they consider themselves to be dedicated and demanding, developing personal styles of teaching. An observation at the institutional process show that the group of teachers is held as active and devoted by the community. In turn, the relational identity for yourself brings a teaching exercise focused on the instruction, the preparation of youngster of the middle and upper-class to the higher education, that shows on the developed teaching styles.

Before finishing, it is worth mentioning that it does not seem that the school in which the teachers of this research work has its image destabilized or that it avoids the institutional programme of instructing young people to enter college – as thought Dubet (2002). It resembles those "highly preserved establishments where students from good families can, still today, have a school trajectory that is not radically different than the ones follow by their parents and grandparents" (Bourdieu, 2004, p. 219). It is understood that the school in question and their teachers have been able to update and align the curriculum, accordingly to OCDE's precepts, creating a flexible and dynamic curriculum, tailored to those students. These *committed* and *experienced* teacher guarantee that there.

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Notes

- 1 The research is titled *State school teachers and their relationships to knowledge* and has as investigative field two state schools (in Portugal, in Lisbon and in Brazil, in Campos dos Goytacazes). The research in Portugal was framed at the Lisbon University's Education Institute, where the author worked as visiting professor in 2017.
- 2 It is important to clarify about these teachers is that they were selected because 1) they taught diverse subjects from seventh to twelfth grade; 2) they accepted to take part in the investigation; and 3) they have been working on the researched school for more than 10 years – time in which it was assumed as being enough to incorporate to their own identity processes that institution's culture. There were eleven subjects at first and the cutback to eight was done for two reasons,

as follows: a subject overlap and a discontent with the depths of the research's questions, which drove a teacher to quit.

- 3 The school was selected because it was state and centennial, the same characteristics of the Brazilian one. It is worth clarifying that the Portuguese public schooling is organized within the logic of cycles and among school groupings, the 1st cycle school, the EB1, is linked, administratively, to the 2nd and 3rd cycles, EB2 and 3, located in a noble area in Lisbon and serviced 1236 students in 2017/2018. With their motto *Tradition and Innovation*, it is a *study continuation school*, which, differently from the “compulsory frequency professional schools”, prepares the students for higher education. It's academic area is divided in departments, namely: Geo-economic Sciences' Department (Geography and Economy); Human and Social Sciences' Department (Catholic Religious and Moral Education, Philosophy and History); Experimental Sciences' Department (Biology, Geology, Chemistry and Physics); Physical Education's Department; Expressions' Department (Visual Arts, Special Education and Music); Foreign Languages' Department (English, Spanish, French and German); Mathematics' Department; Latin's and Portuguese's Department; Technology's Department (Informatics and Technological Education).
- 4 This notion was expressed by the author as follows: All that concerns me, starting with my name, and penetrating my conscience, comes to me from the outside world, from the mouths of others (from the mother), etc. and it is given to me with intonation, with the emotional tone of their values. I am aware of myself, originally, through others: from them I receive the word, form and tone that will serve the original formation of the representation that I will have of me. (Bakhtin, 1992, p. 278)
- 5 It is an adaptation made for this study. The dotted line between the two presented processes in the board is a formal attempt to make explicit that there is a total integration between those two dimensions, divided here for didactic and operational effect.
- 6 Largely discussed concept throughout the work and defined as “the social process that transforms values and principles into action and subjectivity, through a specific and organized professional work”. (Dubet, 2002, p.32).
- 7 All names are fictional to preserve anonymity.

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