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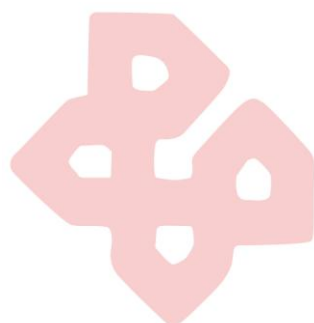
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FORMACIÓN DE PROFESORES E IDENTIDAD PROFESIONAL: LA CONTRIBUCIÓN DEL TRABAJO COLABORATIVO EN EDUCACIÓN

*Teacher training and professional identity: the contribution of
collaborative work in education*



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Resumen:

En el ámbito de la formación de profesores, presentamos la percepción de los estudiantes de los cursos de maestría de habilitación para la docencia sobre la contribución del trabajo colaborativo en el proceso de construcción de su identidad profesional. Los datos recogidos a partir de narrativas reflexivas sobre los que nos centramos reflejan las percepciones de 44 estudiantes a la salida de la primera experiencia de práctica de enseñanza supervisada que consideramos ilustrativa de un verdadero trabajo en red. El análisis de contenido de las narrativas se centra en cinco categorías de análisis: i) papel de los profesores supervisores de la IES en la realización de la PES; ii) el papel de los orientadores cooperantes en la realización de la PES; iii) adquisición / desarrollo de competencias relativas a la dimensión profesional, social y ética; iv) adquisición / desarrollo de competencias relativas a la dimensión de participación en la escuela y de relación con la

comunidad; y v) adquisición / desarrollo de competencias reflexivas sobre la práctica. Entendemos que este es un proceso constructivo en el sentido en que el pasante se construye como profesional, mediante la forma como refleja, de forma autónoma, pero también a partir de la reflexión dialógica tanto con el par pedagógico / grupo del centro de práctica, como con el supervisor y orientador cooperante, en el contexto de la comunidad educativa en que actúa.

Palabras clave: *formación de profesores, identidad profesional, narrativas reflexivas, supervisión situacional, trabajo colaborativo*

Abstract:

Within the scope of teacher training, we present the perception of students who attend the masters of arts in teaching about the contribution of collaborative work networks in the process of creating their professional identity. The data collected from reflective narratives on which we focused reflect the perceptions of 44 students after their first experience of supervised teaching practice, which we consider to be elucidative of a true network work. The content analysis of the narratives focuses on five levels of analysis: i) role of Higher Education supervising teachers in the implementation of Supervised Teaching Practice (STP); ii) role of cooperative counsellors in the implementation of STP; iii) acquisition / development of competences related to the professional, social and ethical dimension; iv) acquisition / development of competences regarding the dimension of school participation and the relationship with the community; and (v) acquisition / development of reflective skills on the practice of teaching. We believe this work to be a constructive process in the sense that the trainee sets himself up as a professional through the way he reflects, autonomously, but also from the dialogical reflection either with the pedagogical pair / group from the teacher training institution, or with the supervisor and cooperative counsellor, in the context of the educational community in which he/she operates.

Key Words: *collaborative work, professional identity, reflective narratives, situational supervision, teacher training.*

1. Introduction

If the days are not easy for teachers, interestingly enough, this is here and now that the founding of identify makes sense. Being a teacher represented, in the past one of the places where the idea of school was invented. Nowadays, their role is essential for the school to be recreated as a space both for individual training and democratic citizenship (Darling-Hammond, Newton & Wei 2010; Flores, 2016).

However, for this to happen, it is essential that teachers are able to reflect on their own profession, finding models of training and working conditions that enable them not only to affirm the importance of personal and organizational aspects in their teaching life, but also to consolidate the collective dimensions of the profession.

We believe that the social and ethics dimension is essential to the formative activity, in particular in the reinvention of the lost concept of professional responsibility, deserving a more careful attention (Krejsler, 2005).

In this sense, the school structures and the process of communication between the members of the educational community should interact in a way to promote a greater involvement.

The school announces the utopia, understood as a not-yet. This is done by focusing on the world of life which tends to adjust the systemic functions to the critically sense shared by different actors, obeying a more critical, more reflexive and more democratizing referential. In this context, the utopia means a critical-school, a reflexive-school and a citizen-school, which implies that the processes of teacher training (initial and lifelong learning) are framed in a humanist matrix, collaborative and (self)-changing, materialized in formative proposals that assume any educational relationship necessarily supported on values, knowledge and practices of reference, and that calls them to enhance reflective teaching and cooperative practices. This necessarily implies teaching/learning instruments aimed at autonomy, cooperation and the subject's criticality, articulating, in this way, education and sustainable human development. By subscribing that "the process of reflexivity is only by a systematic exercise of reflection carried out frequently and collectively, moving from the individual to the collective and the collective to the individual" (Aragão, 2014, p.211), it is our understanding that this way of being, living and learning cannot be absent from the contemporary teacher's training.

2. Teacher training in Portugal and the demand for collaborative work

Although it is not our intention to draw up a comprehensive history of teacher training in Portugal, we believe it is essential to understand the (complex) phenomena involved in the training of teachers which affect the development of their professional and personal identity. Since training is physical and temporally located, it is our belief that, by presenting this framework, we can contribute to a clearer understanding of our positioning and proposals presented in this study.

It is generally recognized that the understanding of the training issue is a real complex topic, so much that the various processes of teacher training in Portugal have been institutionalized in distinct historical moments, often obeying to partial projects shown in various levels of the educational system and developed from (not always convergent) theoretical assumptions about the education issues (Pacheco, 1999; Campos, 2001). This variety of backgrounds for different projects, combined with the imperatives of social and economic nature, was therefore at the genesis of a certain heterogeneity of training systems (initial and ongoing), that, too often, coexist at different levels of the educational system. This dispersion is, however, justified. In an attempt to give an account of this variation, we will no longer linger on this general characterization of what has been the initial training in Portugal, and thus contribute to a better understanding of the conditions that are the origin of the current reality.

More recently, with the Bologna process and with the creation of the European Space of Higher Education and Research, the need for renewed knowledge

has quickly emerged, both in the conceptual dimension and in the dimension of the interventions. New models of learning and, consequently, new teaching practices in line with these references are, therefore, urgent. Thereunder, the models of teacher training, deserve our full reflection in particular the process of the supervised teaching practice organization and/or professional teacher training, which, until then, contemplated different and diverse initial teacher training curricular models (Formosinho e Niza, 2009). In fact, the decree-law approved by the Portuguese government - Decree-Law no. 43/2007 of 22nd February - put an end to this so little interventionist and regulatory position from the government, requiring the institutions to follow common parameters and contemplating mandatory training areas- general educational training, specific educational, cultural, social and ethical training in the specific teaching area and initiation to professional practice, each with a minimum number of ECTS.

Arising from these changes, we highlight that the curricular organization of a study plan/course should have as a reference the professional development of future teachers, associated with the promotion of a critical, collaborative and reflective attitude, towards its working context and organizational aspects. As we see it, the conditions for the implementation of STP and/or in-service professionalization crucially rely on consolidating relations between training schools and institutions, and investing on the advanced vocational training of an experienced and stable core of school tutors.

Underlying this model of training, is the understanding that the trainee is inherently a researcher of its own practice and of others, in particular of its pedagogical partner and also its cooperating teacher. There is an intention to overcome the logic of mere usage denaturing the practices in the light of theoretical and analytical tools that allow teachers to look at themselves as a researcher who also produces knowledge, even if it is in constant reworking.

Keeping these ideas in mind, we assume, according to Wei, Andree & Darling-Hammond (2009) Hadar & Brody (2010), that under a teacher training constructivist paradigm such as the one we plead, collaborative work plays a central role.

As teachers and also as pre-service and in service teacher trainers, we consider collaborative work a fundamental strategy that presupposes a joint work to take place, associated to an effective sharing of ideas and experiences and a deep reflection on both the practice and the knowledge put together in pursuit of a common purpose, that is, improving teachers practice. The term (alongside with cooperative work) has been used to refer to a type of joint activity that gathers a certain group of people around a common purpose (Owyang, 2008). This strategy is widely assumed in the context of in-service teacher training, where the valorization of collaborative work between different actors (trainees and trainers), in order to prepare and conduct curricular development experiences provides increased support, offers multiple perspectives and enriches the reflection. In this teachers' training context, teachers work in groups (collaboratively), with the presence of a trainer,

discussing and reflecting on classroom practices, preparing tasks and discussing contents and strategies.

Considering that the Higher School XXX has a wide experience of training teachers and early childhood educators, we will present here some evidences from our pre-service teacher training that illustrate, in our view, the decisive contribution that collaborative work can bring to these educational contexts, at least in the way these students, about to become teachers, perceived them.

3. Pedagogical Supervision Scenarios in Teacher Training

Among the various supervision scenarios (or models) recommended by different authors, and which underlie different training conceptions, it is possible to retain an overview, more or less systematized, of the various approaches as ways of monitoring and orientation of training, in order to allow a logical framework of the study here presented. Alarcão and Tavares (2003) consider nine scenarios for guidance of supervision of pedagogical practice, namely: artisanal imitation, learning through guided discovery, behaviorist, clinical; psych pedagogical, personal, reflexive and ecological, dialogic. They call our attention, however, to the fact that these should not be seen as closed models of mutual exclusion, given that, in practice, they coexist with frequency. The distinction between the various scenarios was theorized in this way as a matter of clarity of exposition, given that, in reality, they interpenetrate.

To the scenario of artisanal imitation are underlid the authority of the master, the immutability of knowledge, the belief in the demonstration and in the imitation as the best way to learn. It was, in some way, the passage testimony of “know-how” from generation to generation as a way of perpetuating the culture, as if they were to be “shaped” by the craftsman though (Alarcão & Tavares, 2003, p.17). Wallace (1991) appointed it as the model of mastery, which had as a precondition the observation of the practice of the master and his instructions allowing the young apprentice to develop their own professional competence. The whole process unfolds from the supervisor, who is seen as the model to reproduce. As in any reproductive process, this scenario does not contemplate possible changes of knowledge and society, it is rather seen as something immutable, which favors the reproduction at the expense of transformation.

In the scenario of learning through guided discovery, the concept of a teacher as a model to follow gives place to analytical knowledge of the various teaching models. This strategy has as its premise the idea that the future teacher must possess knowledge of theoretical models and have the opportunity, in different contexts, to observe different teachers, even before they begin their process of pedagogical training service. This second model already entitles the teacher with a more active role, since it allows him/her to analyze contextually the various educational situations and then apply them in real context. However, in this

perspective, framed in the academic tradition, teaching is to apply, in fact, the academic knowledge learnt previously. It is related to a notion of supervision as technology and it assumes the use of scientific knowledge available to act rationally and to modify the educational reality.

The behaviorist scenario is associated to the perspectives that emphasize the micro-teaching, i.e., the creation of opportunities in which teachers can train certain pre-defined skills. With this type of program, there was an intention to prepare the future teacher to start the process of in-service professionalization with sufficient knowledge that allowed them to identify more or less appropriate practices. To our understanding, this scenario continues, however, to perpetuate the imitation of the model, without prompting the commitment of the trainee to work on a progressive acquisition of knowledge, which should be based on their practice since the program was based on the observation and discussion of unfamiliar classes to the teacher and not on the observation and discussion of their own lessons.

The model of clinical supervision, probably the scenario most frequently mentioned in literature, has emerged as a wave of reaction to the standards established previously. This model, framed within a paradigm of reflective training, proposed to release the supervision of their previous meanings and their threatening, administrative, bureaucratic and autocratic practices, based on a certain detachment between the supervisor, seen as a keeper of knowledge, and the teacher, trainee, as a mere recipient of this knowledge. It aimed to put, in its place, an approach based on inquiry processes that promoted the thinking and professionalization of teachers, based on a collaborative relation between supervisor and supervisee. For this reason, the clinical model promotes inquiry processes about the action, establishing the importance, the dignity and the value of teachers and the collaboration between them. Rasco (1999) notes, therefore, the four most important values of the scenario: collegiality, collaboration, service and ethics.

The classroom is metaphorically considered as a clinic and is taken as a starting point for the analysis of the phenomena occurring, following a structure with several phrases that constitute the cycle of supervision, planning and evaluation.

Going back to the perspective of Alarcão and Tavares (2003), in the psychopedagogical scenario, supervisor and supervisee also maintain a relationship of teaching-learning characterized by dialogue and the enhancement of the personal component in which the first helps the second to develop abilities and skills and teaches him how to exploit the knowledge of solving the problems that the teaching position may face him/her with. It is developed in three stages (preparation of the classroom, discussion of the lesson, evaluation of the supervisory cycle) that should take place in a climate of encouragement.

As Alarcão and Tavares said, the personal scenario, as indicated by its name, attaches importance to the development of the person of the teacher. This dimension, which in the two previously mentioned scenarios was thought as essential, here takes another magnitude, given that assumes a special attention to

the degree of development of the teacher, to his/her perceptions, feelings and goals. In this perspective, the training must provide experiential moments and it should help the teacher to reflect on them and on their consequences. The teacher is the model itself. The perception that the teacher has of his/her experiences is essential, as well as those of the other people involved, who are called to collaborate in the construction of knowledge. It is a cognitive and constructivist perspective, in which self-knowledge would be the corner stone of the psychological development and training of teachers. The familiarization of observation techniques is essential in a model which is based on the practice of observing lessons.

In the reflective scenario, knowledge is constructed in an active form into the action and it is systematized by reflecting on it, through a process of training which combines experimenting and dialoguing reflection on lived and observed experiences according to a methodology of learning by doing and thinking (Alarcão & Tavares, 2003). An approach of this kind, the role of the supervisor is to help the supervisee to understand each situation, to interpret it and adjust their action to the extent of what he learnt. Investment in training throughout their professional life, adopting a self-supervising attitude that leads to emancipation is encouraged.

In the ecological scenario, personal development integrates concepts of socialization, it builds relationships between personal theories and public theories, in each context, what is true and right (Alarcão & Tavares, 2003). The young supervisee is offered the possibility of experiencing diversified experiences, of playing new roles in a variety of contexts in a succession of steps which will be a part of his training and education development process.

Following the evolutionary framework presented by Alarcão and Tavares, the dialogic scenario assumes a training program which is practiced in an environment of constructive dialogue between teacher and supervisor, in which both seek to innovate and bring about change in educational contexts. In this perspective, the language has a crucial role, because it works as a booster of cognitive capacity.

This way, and as summary, Alarcão and Tavares (2003) present the scenarios in a historic and cultural logic, temporarily contextualized with their implications to the supervising practice.

According to the authors, this type of training implies an open and flexible model that respects the right to difference and, consequently, it allows different evolutionary processes that lead to acts of conscious and responsible education. When referring to a model which is necessarily “unfinished and constantly capable of self-regulation through a persisting enquiry attitude” (Sá-Chaves, 2002, p.161), the author refers to a paradigm of inquiry. It was in this context, that we opted for the designation and implementation of a scenario or situational model (we understand the situational concept, taking into account the etymological origin of the word, i.e. the existence of events and/or events inherent to the condition of being situated or to the condition of people). We believe that this form of monitoring/supervising the pedagogical action considers the human dimensions, the knowledge and experience

reflected and which each supervisee brings along, the affective relationship and atmosphere. This is a situational perspective, the accelerator of multiple moments of discovery of personal and professional development that this study is based on. By revealing itself through the construction of reflective narratives, the teacher is given the opportunity, in an open and flexible way, to underline the right to its identity and, as such, one highlights and emphasizes the uniqueness of the training courses.

It is a supervision of transforming nature and emancipatory orientation, potentially subversive, based on democratic values of freedom and social responsibility, which is capable of recognizing the absence and of reclaiming a higher presence of these values in the practice of school education, and also in their own practices. It is a supervision that moves slowly between what education is and what it should be, exploring the possible, but always doubting its own value and finding in this doubt its main reason for being, defending a collegial and dialogic supervision, oriented towards the construction of a democratic society. It is understood that a pedagogy for autonomy is inscribed in this design and it constitutes a justifiable direction for supervision, causing teachers and students to become competent and develop as participants and self-determined, socially responsible and critically aware (and beyond) in education environments, by reference to a vision of education as a space of emancipation and (inter)personal and social transformation.

4. Method and Objectives

Being this teacher training model fully implemented from the guidelines of the Bologna process, it seemed important to us to investigate and assess the impact of this formative logic in the students, future teachers. With this in mind, we developed a longitudinal study whose purpose is to reveal the perceptions of Masters courses' students. The data we are presenting here reflect the perceptions of these students when they come out from their first STP, which we consider to be illustrative of a true collaborative network. We believe this is a work of enchainment in the sense the trainee builds himself as a professional, and by the way he reflects, independently, but also from the dialogic reflection either with the pedagogical pair/group from the teacher-training center, or even with the EIS supervisor and cooperating teacher, in the context of the educational community in which he operates.

Given our understanding that this would be the most adequate research methodology to deepen our knowledge about the phenomenon under study, we have chosen a qualitative research. Qualitative methodology, being based on a phenomenological model in which reality is rooted in the subjects' perceptions and aiming at understanding and finding meaning through verbal narratives and observations, thus emerges as a privileged methodology in educational studies such as ours.

Being inherent forms of achieving knowledge and structuring the world and our own experience, narratives are not only a mode of representation, but also a specific mode of construction and constitution of reality, as Bruner (1991) points out. In order to study this mode of constructing knowledge, we must carefully examine the way people try to make sense of their experiences, and they do so, among other things, by narrating them.

To make the proposed objective clear, we defined a sample of reflective narratives designed by 44 students enrolled in the STP, integrated into the curriculum of the teacher-training masters course with a specialization in pre-school education and teaching 1st Cycle of Elementary Education of Portuguese and Portuguese History and Geography in the 2nd Cycle in the academic year of 2017/2018, in XXX. In our curricula design, we use practice narratives as reports of students' experiences from their insertion in supervised teaching practices scenarios. These reports act as triggers for discussion and motivate students' search for explanations and reflexion. This pedagogical use of practice narratives is part of a set of active teaching and learning methodologies, intended to develop this key skill in the context of reflective professionals training.

The research was conducted in the 1st semester of this academic year and developed in different stages. First, the trainees' collaboration was requested, being that all the access to the information was previously negotiated with them, by means of Moodle platform (WEB2.0 tool), where they were all informed about the research, so as to make it transparent. They were advised about the nature of the research which was sought to be developed, in order to make them aware of the expectations regarding their active participation. They were also clarified about the objectives of the research and method we had selected for data collection.

Given the volume of information gathered through the various discussions forums, we embarked on a first reading of all materials/resources produced, taking into account themes, to reach the systematization of the material which was really significant. In other words, we tried to find the first meaningful units of content from the speeches expressed in the different shared/discussed forums.

After this first insight into the material, we started from global moving to particular and we gradually began to split the texts in thematic units of meaning, according to the thematic criteria previously defined for this job. We noticed that these were particularly associated with the teacher professional identity, as the discussions/questions/ practices occurred, as indeed, we expected to happen since the beginning of the process.

This way, it was possible to combine two processes - inferential and deductive or inductive method - for qualitative analyses of information and for the elaboration of the general categories of analysis system. A mixed procedure was then selected, articulating the themes previously defined with other themes that emerged from the dynamics of sharing/ discussing in forums. Thus, we assume that the analysis performed is close to the understanding sociology, especially because it did

not followed a pre-existing grid that usually serves the classical techniques of content analysis, such as explained by Bardin (2010).

With regard to data collection, we favored the use of diversified sources of information, an essential requirement in the research process so as to allow an in-depth understanding of this analyzing phenomenon, i.e., the processes involved in the professionalism development. Being so, the instruments used for the collection of information were reflective narratives, as well as three sessions for analysis and discussions. The data analyses focused on content analysis of narrative texts that constitute the fundamental corpus, which allowed access to the reflective processes and knowledge mobilized by students, uncovering and guiding the journeys made.

This reflective instrument about the process(es) refers to a duplication of investigative and formative functions: in the first case it worked as a (self) formation and (self) adjustment instrument, allowing, through the understanding of processes, the comprehension of how the strategy was being developed, as well as the adjustment, safeguarding the due limitations, and in time, its performance in the light of students' reactions and the obtained results. For the purposes of research, on the other hand, it constitutes a source of relevant information which, despite its idiosyncratic nature, involves the meta-reflexive dimension. We believe this allows, through the inner vision and a process of self-alienation, another perspective about the evolution of the process regarding the program implementation and formation and of their own development processes as trainees.

The analysis of all written records was, therefore, subject to the content analyses technique, having been made by use of a system of categories developed for this specific purpose. We used the abbreviation S (for subject) followed by the conventional number that we have given to each of the participants.

5. Results and discussion

As defended by Bassey (2000), the narrative text is generally organized in sections or categories for an easier reading, representing periods of time during which significant phases of research occurred. Therefore, the learning paths of the participants in the study, appear in an analytical/interpretative language but also authentic as it involves speeches collected in the natural context of this empirical study. The development of reflexive narratives led to the awareness, on the part of students, of the educational process where they were involved STP.

It is our intention to highlight the contextualised educational experience of these future teachers with strong repercussions on the quality of the teaching and learning process, and about the (re)configuration of their professional identity. It is, therefore, essential the existence of the supervision by a teacher from a Higher Education Institution- in the case presented here, mediated by technology- throughout the whole process. We have organised the results according to the following categories:

- i. The role/contribution of teachers, XXX supervisors in the implementation of STP;
- ii. Role/contribution of cooperating teacher in the realization of the STP;
- iii. Acquisition/development of competences related to professional and ethical dimensions;
- iv. Acquisition/development of competences related to the dimension of participation in school and the relationship with the community;
- v. Acquisition/ development of reflexive skills about their practice.

In what concerns the role/contribution of the teacher supervisors from XXX in the implementation of STP, the records that we have encountered are virtually unanimous in stressing the crucial role played by the supervisors of XXX in this process, present in various aspects. We highlight the opportunity for implementation of collaborative work, referred to in different ways by several participants: “it was a team effort in which my teacher had the concern to always make me constructive criticism with the sense of improvement each and every lesson planning” (S22); “fruit of collaborative work, the co-operators played a decisive role in guidance and counselling” (S05). Still on this role/contribution of XXX teacher’s supervisors, we wish to emphasise the importance of the feedback procedure in the (re)discovery of professional identity. “The teacher’s supervisor provided feedback (...) helped me to reflect on themes such as the professional identity” (S02) - in addition to the encouragement and suggestions shared with the students. “The ongoing incentive, the sharing of ideas and suggestions have helped us grow and improve in our intervention” (S17); “I would highlight the encouragement and the suggestions of strategies given that promote more learning” (S25); “in all orientation, I felt motivated to do more and better” (S18). The awareness of the need for a reflective exercise combined with the experience of STP and the growth of professional identity had, without a doubt, the contribution of our XXX teachers. This was something acknowledged by the participants: “it allowed us to have another vision of our practice and it made us reflect on our attitudes” (S10); “the teacher’s supervisors have played a fundamental role, because they offered us an enormous support and a reflexive support so that our development could be always positive” (S16); “since the first day the supervisor supported us and sought our evolution, causing the reflective exercise” (S17); “the supervisor played an essential role in my growth” (S18). The presence and close monitoring are other dimensions valued by the students, who highlight the assuring character that can come from that: “we were always accompanied, all lessons were revised by our teacher (...) there wasn’t a single lesson in which I didn’t feel confident” (S43). Although the units registration that we have just presented may be interpreted as incurring the risk of this close monitoring creating a dependency of the supervise towards the supervisor (in the light of the artisanal imitation scenario), the vast majority of the expressed perceptions in the narratives are indicative of a reflexive, ecological and dialogical scenario. With regard to the role/contribution of cooperating teacher in the realization of STP, the most significant registration units are associated with autonomy, confidence and support, resulting from this collaborative teaching exercise. As an example, we give

voice to our students: “I emphasise the autonomy in my interventions and the great support in the planning” (S12); “without a doubt, a support, being that the relationship was established as a trust relationship” (S19); “the cooperating teacher never set any obstacle to our intervention and cooperated in the activities performed in class, trusting in my work” (S21); “I always felt supported in my development, because he/she was always helpful and available to help me with the difficulties I found and she let me assume my interventions” (S25); “they give us moments of freedom for us to be able to intervene” (S26); “in my case, my teacher always gave me total freedom” (S27).

In addition to this, the educational relationship, in particular the positive interaction with class, in general, and the way in which each student has been the object of constant and joint reflection “we shared strategies to fight the difficulties felt by our students concerning their low self-esteem” (S10); “we shared several experiences and tips to balance the relations which are meant to be emphatic and assertive” (S01); “there is always a moment in which we could discuss the essential question about the class that we were going to have in front of us and what type of strategies would be better with this specific class” (S03).

It is worth noting the appreciation that the trainees manifest, in these records, for the balance that the figure of the cooperating teacher reveals, as a potentially model of intervention and, simultaneously as an encouragement for the emancipation of the trainees. By opening the doors of their classrooms to trainees, many of these cooperating teacher seek, in a constructive perspective, to innovate and bring change to their own practices. This is a component particularly valued by trainees who, while recognizing the importance of the theoretical basis (“before the difficulties seen during our practice (...) I felt the need to resort to theory to try and find strategies that would help me overcome these difficulties and justify some of the pupils’ attitudes” (S09), they do not hesitate to share the fascination felt by the practical and ecological dimension of the classroom experience: “the theory does not bring us the reality nor the real feeling as much as the practice, where we have students and we have to work including them all” (S38).

Concerning the acquisition/development of skills related to the professional, social and ethical dimensions, future teachers recognize the importance of these dimensions: “[it] allowed me to introduce and develop initiatives. [...] For example, involving parents and/or other entities of the community. All the practice was performed taking into account the professional role to adopt and, therefore, also respecting the ethical values required” (S01). Even more, they associate the skills related to the professional, social and ethical dimensions with their own self-awareness: “we get to know our limits and [...] it put me to the test and see if my ideals were the best and it showed me how I could improve myself as a person and as a professional” (S02). It is this self-awareness that also leads to reflecting on the very act of the teaching-learning process, thought from the perspective of a trainee while learner:

the trainings, without a doubt, compel us to deepen our knowledge, even if it is because of the fear of the questions our students can ask. I think that only when doing my master was I able to have this perception, of learning how to teach. When we learn with a greater purpose in mind, which is to teach, to develop the ability to interpret and analyse the different contents differently from the way I used to do until now. (S38)

Closely linked with collaborative work, the participants admit that this set of skills enabled a professional development (“At the professional level... I also had conversations with my cooperating teacher where she told me experiences that have enriched me professionally” - S03. They further value a direct contact with the need to assume the collaborative and supportive work of a teacher (“with this experience I was given the opportunity to have contact with the reality of a teacher work, to collaborate with a colleague from work, to learn how to listen and to tailor my speech to what is requested”- S07), and grasp the wider dimension of the educational context (“helped me to understand how it works in a “big” school”, I learnt how I have to work and get along with my future colleagues from work”-S44).

The focus on learning and personalized teaching is also signaled - "I have learned that all students are different and deserve differentiated attention and strategy. And I also learned that a child only learns when he is emotionally well and motivated for learning"(S18); "it is necessary to know the institution, its community and values so that we can teach according to the values and needs of each child" (S29). In identifying such diverse aspects of these three dimensions, trainees recognize their ecological and complex character in the sense that they imply their self-knowledge, integrating it with the need to socialize, experience and interact with the other members of the educational community.

In close conjunction with these dimensions, we sought to identify the perceptions of the trainees on the acquisition / development of skills regarding the dimension of participation in school and the relationship with the members of the educational community. At this level, it is noteworthy the variety of initiatives presented: "I autonomously planned study visits, trying as much as possible to involve the community" (S01); "I had the chance to present and develop several initiatives, always with the purpose of achieving the school's institutional objectives. For example, involving caregivers and / or other community entities"(S04); "the moments of sharing both with the community and with the other elements of the school are essential for our pedagogical practice to be more efficient and constructive" (S11).

There are a number of experiences shared by participants in this category. We emphasize the following excerpts from the reflective narratives: "there are many ways to include parents as well as the rest of the community as parents talk about their professions, prepare material to help with the lessons, holiday preparation, and so on" (S02);

the school in carrying out certain projects (one of them, for example, putting together plastic stoppers to help a boy to have a wheelchair) leads me to get

involved in the school campaigns and as a teacher I set the example for students to have civic attitudes and of mutual assistance. On the other hand, I am helping people in the community. Like this example, many others we have opportunity to experience during the practice. We also tried to involve the parents in the children's learning, for example, in the week of reading, there were parents going to read stories to the room. (S05)

Curiously, one of the students pointed out that all her collaborative work had really started with STP - "gave me the ability to communicate and network with colleagues whom I did not associate with in college. Participation in school activities is a fundamental point, because being a teacher is not restricted to school hours or to one job"(S28). Another student associates this dimension with the promotion of success: "knowledge sharing on the part of the community will also help in the success of learning and in the development of competence, beyond the opening of horizons" (S08). At the same time, there are those who still identify the difficulty of a work of proximity - "regarding the relationship with the community (specifically other groups and teachers) I realized how difficult it is to organize an event. Everybody places obstacles and this implies a great effort to reconcile the differences of each and every one".

One of the dimensions that we wanted to assess in this study was the identification of evidence regarding the promotion of reflexive competences on pedagogical practice, aiming at the subjects' autonomy, criticality and their ability to cooperate and develop collaborative work. In this context, the acquisition / development of reflexive competences on the practice of future teachers by STP is, in our view, an essential mark in teacher training and professional identity.

We thus organized various evidences related to the promotion of reflexive skills from the narratives that contributed to clarify the nature of this process of (self)reflection and joint work.

Generally speaking, students recognize the essential nature of reflection and point to both the individual and the collective dimensions:

I reflected a lot during this stage on the demotivation of some students; the lack of self-esteem of others; the fact that they did not apprehend the contents made me reflect on my role and how to act. I reflected individually and with the group. I learned that being a teacher is not an easy task and that frustration is part of our daily lives. It is up to each one of us to overcome these difficulties after confrontation and negotiation with others (S01);

Often, reflection comes from self-inspection of one's own practices, an initiative perceived as beneficial: "Whenever I gave a class, I would go home to think about what might have failed and always wanted to improve it. Now I can understand what went wrong" (S41), "every day I reflect on the lessons I have taught, which has helped me to be more reflective about my students' attitudes as well as mine, which has always contributed to improvement" (S12).

Given the opportunity to observe the practice of both the cooperating teacher and the pedagogical pair foreseen in this practice model, reflection is often raised by looking at the Other: "looking at another teacher and checking his practices leads us to reflection - Do I want to be like this? Is this posture the most correct?" (S04). The other's gaze is also seen as an added value, especially in situations where the other element of the pedagogical pair also functions as another point of support. In fact, it is not only positively acknowledged that collaborative work in pedagogical terms is likely to be more profitable, as it allows a closer (and therefore sometimes not always objective) and more permanent view of individual performance: "being criticized by someone who is relatively close helps us deconstruct and build our way of being and being" (S35); "there is a discussion of strategies and methodologies with someone at the same level as ours." (S37).

This kaleidoscope of reflexive looks in pedagogical supervision seems to be, therefore, another dimension of collaborative work and teacher collegiality to value. Nevertheless, regarding collaborative work, it should be noted that participants tend to overestimate the cooperating supervisor model, in a dialogic scenario. There is, thus, still a long way to go in order to achieve this greater goal: to learn how to learn with others, creatively (Covey, 2014).

6. Conclusions

When addressing teacher training, the collegial and collaborative dimensions naturally arise as striking features of professional identity. This is especially relevant when we advocate supervision as an essentially horizontal, collaborative and self-supervising activity, supporting professional development and collaboration within the framework of teacher's autonomy. The multiplicity of functions and tasks performed by teachers nowadays and the need for systemic articulation implies that the teacher can no longer be trained solely in the classroom (Sá-Chaves, 2002). As member of a group, he/she takes part in an organization whose sole purpose it to promote learning and the development of each and every one, within the scope of integrated and emancipated citizenship. This horizontal supervision can only be assumed as representation of personal emancipation and social transformation when it puts itself at the service of a greater desideratum, such as collective change, thus transcending individual interests and promoting the role of the teacher in contemporary society as one of continuous questioning.

Considering that our experience on teacher training and early childhood educators, we have chosen to present some evidences from our pre-service teacher training, that illustrate, in our point of view, the decisive contribution that collaborative work can bring to these educational contexts, at least in the way that students, on the path to become teachers, perceive them. The content analysis of the narratives focuses on five levels of analysis: i) role of Higher Education supervising teachers in the implementation of STP; ii) role of cooperating teacher in the implementation of STP; iii) acquisition / development of competences related to

the professional, social and ethical dimension; iv) acquisition/development of competences regarding the dimension of school participation and the relationship with the community; and (v) acquisition / development of reflective skills on the practice of teaching. Although these five dimensions of analysis deserved slightly different levels of recognition and appreciation, we believe the narratives produced to be illustrative cases of situated reflective learning developed in the context of collaborative network.

Our study has, nevertheless, limitations, namely the small number of participants involved. Another limitation that comes to mind has to do with the idea that the students' narratives were written under what we could call a "biased" view, driven by the willing to please the teacher. Although we strongly believe that this was not the case, we are aware of the fact that not all students had the motivation nor the ability to fully explore the opportunities provided by this collaborative networking, both in terms of learning reflectively (Pereira, Parente & Silva, 2016) or engaging in the collaborative work.

Being part of a longitudinal project, our aim is to present and discuss the students' perception about the contribution of collaborative work networks in the process of creating their professional identity and compare these pre-service training data with other training contexts, namely in-service. In our point of view, the discussions and reflections that we have drawn can also profitably be explored in the case of in-service teacher training. By doing so, we provide these students a more demanding but also a more effective way of learning. Furthermore, by approaching pre-service and in-service teacher training methodologies, one reduces the gap between these two levels of training, allowing a more natural and easier transition between them.

At a time when we are increasingly talking about "situated learning theories" in communities of practice as an active strategy for improving organization and optimizing practices, by means of exchanging with colleagues both for qualitative and informative reasons, it is urgent to reflect on a school-centered innovation and on teachers' in-service training as parallel educational processes (Bolívar, 2012).

Furthermore, the exercise of supervision in its different dimensions - behavioral, scientific, ecological, cultural, reflective, ethical and formative - fosters mutual growth, supervisor and supervised commit to a relationship of complicity and respect for professional maturation. Within the scope of its functions (Gonçalves, 2015), the supervisor must be someone who is always along the path of the supervised, demanding, motivating, challenging and supporting him. It is up to the supervisor to take on a pivotal role in the development of the supervision process, approaching and distancing whenever necessary, thus allowing the necessary space to act and to rethink continuously.

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