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Teacher resilience in adverse contexts: Issues of professionalism and professional identity

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Introduction

Over the last fifteen years or so, resilience has emerged as a field of research, not only in countries that experience high rates of attrition, but also in contexts in which the teaching profession has gone through policy and social changing circumstances affecting its social and economic status (Beltman et al., 2011; Mansfield et al, 2012; Gu & Li, 2013; Flores, 2014; Gu, 2014). According to Le Cornu (2009, p. 717), “one of the main reasons for the increased attention to teacher resilience is the considerable attention paid in recent years to the high proportion of teachers who leave the profession in the first years”. However, as the author stressed, resilience is not only important for early career teachers but for enhancing teacher effectiveness. Similarly, Gu and Day (2007, p. 1302) state that “A shift in focus from teacher stress and burnout to resilience provides a promising perspective to understand the ways that teachers manage and sustain their motivation and commitment in times of change”. Although resilience has evolved as a research topic over the last fifteen years of so, there is a scarcity of studies in this field, especially as far as experienced teachers are concerned. According to Mansfield et al. (2012, p. 366), “research specifically focused on teacher

resilience is in its infancy”. Also, Gu and Day (2007, p. 1303) state that “the question of promoting resilience in teachers in times of change remains overlooked”. It is possible, however, to identify some studies that deal with resilience as an important construct to understand teachers’ predispositions, behaviors and attitudes in adverse teaching contexts. Existing literature suggests that teacher resilience is complex and dynamic and it involves a range of personal and contextual factors (Mansfield et al. 2012, Mansfield et al., 2014). It is within this perspective that the study reported in this paper was carried out in a context which has been, over the last few years, particularly challenging for Portuguese teachers. Over the last decade research has shown that rather than being seen as an “innate quality”, resilience is understood as “relative, developmental and dynamic, manifesting itself as a result of a dynamic process within a given context” (Gu & Day, 2007, p. 1305). Although there is a growing body of literature that deals with teacher resilience, it is possible to identify a wide range of definitions of resilience, most of which emphasize both individual and contextual factors and its multidimensionality and complexity (Mansfield et al. 2012). In the next section, the key features highlighted in teacher resilience literature are identified.

Understanding teacher resilience

A recent review by Beltman et al (2011) points to the emergence of resilience as a field of research. However, the authors identify a wide range of conceptualizations of resilience which demonstrate the complex and multifaceted nature of the concept, but it also raises issues of ambiguity and consistency.

As a matter of fact, teacher resilience has been described in various ways in the literature. It has been related to “the capacity to successfully overcome personal vulnerability and environmental stressors” (Oswald, Johnson, & Howard, 2003, p. 50) and to “specific

strategies that individuals employ when they experience an adverse situation” (Castro et al, 2010, p. 263). For instance, Brunetti (2006, p. 813) defines resilience as “a quality that enables teachers to maintain commitment to teaching and their teaching practices despite challenging conditions and recurring setbacks”.

Literature on resilience has evolved from identifying personal traits to looking at the factors that influence the resilience process. This implies understanding resilience not only as a psychological construct but as a multidimensional and socially constructed concept (Gu and Day, 2007). Therefore, context plays a key role in the development and demonstration of resilience (Mansfield et al. 2012) as well as support, both formal and informal (Paptraianou & Le Cornu, 2014). As such, “resilience is not a quality that is innate. Rather, it is a construct that is relative, developmental, dynamic, connoting the positive adaptation and development of individuals in the presence of challenging circumstances” (Gu & Day, 2007, p. 1305).

Drawing upon existing definitions and understandings of resilience, Mansfield et al. (2012) identify the following key themes: it involves a dynamic process, it is associated with the interaction between person and context, and it is related to the ways in which individuals respond to challenging or adverse situations. In addition, there are (individual and contextual) protective and risk factors that determine the resilience process. Personal strengths such as particular characteristics, attributes and assets have also been identified (Mansfield et al., 2012). As such, resilience is not only an outcome but also a process involving the “interactions between early career teachers and the social, cultural, political and relational contexts of their new profession” (Pearce and Morrison, 2011, p. 48).

As Gu and Day (2007) assert, resilience, as a multidimensional, socially constructed concept, is situated in the discourse of teaching as emotional practice and it is relative, dynamic and developmental in nature. The authors define resilience as the “capacity to continue “bounce

back”, to recover strengths or spirit quickly and efficiently in the face of adversity, is closely allied to a strong sense of vocation, self-efficacy and motivation to teach which are fundamental to a concern for promoting achievement in all aspects of students’ lives” (Day & Gu, 2007, p. 1302).

A recent study by Mansfield et al. (2012) shows that graduating and early career teacher associate resilience with multi-dimensional and overlapping features. The authors identified 23 interrelated aspects of resilience which were organized according to four overarching dimensions: the emotional (managing emotions, enjoying teaching, etc.), the profession-related (commitment to students, being reflective and flexible, etc.), the motivational (motivation and enthusiasm, being positive and optimistic, etc.) and the social (interactions with students and colleagues, interpersonal and communication skills, etc.).

Research literature has also identified the risk factors related to contexts of teaching seen as adverse contexts such as heavy workload, classroom management, feelings of unpreparedness, lack of support, lack of resources, etc. (Jenkins, Smith & Maxwell, 2009; McCormack & Gore; 2008; Sumsion, 2003). Also, Le Cornu (2009) has identified the complex and dynamic interactions between individuals and their student teaching contexts. Writing in the context of a study of pre-service teachers in their practicum, she identified three main features that contribute to build resilience: opportunities for peer support; explicit teaching of particular skills and attitudes; and adoption of particular roles by pre-service teachers, mentors at school and university supervisors. In a similar vein, Pearce and Morrison’s (2011) study has investigated the impact of professional, individual and relational conditions on the resilience of early career teachers and has highlighted the importance of understanding how they engage in the formation of professional identities.

Gu and Days's study (2007, p. 1311) of three resilient teachers demonstrated the "sense of meaning and moral purpose" in the "pursuit and exploration of their professional values and ideologies". The authors conclude that "these internal values and motivation, fuelled their capacities to exercise emotional strengths and professional competence and subsequently provided them with the resilience which enabled them to meet the challenges of the changing environments in which they worked". In this way, the negative effects of stressful working conditions and life events were managed as positive personal and professional resources in their life trajectories. Similarly, Flores, Ferreira and Parente (2014) found that what kept teachers going in challenging circumstances were the students as well as the positive relationships at school and supportive and encouraging school culture and leadership.

Individual protective factors include intrinsic motivation, persistence, optimism, emotional intelligence, sense of humor and willingness to take risks, whereas environmental protective factors include mentor support, peer support, family and friends' support and school administration support (see Mansfield et al. 2012). Also, Castro et al (2010) showed that novice teachers utilized a variety of strategies, including help-seeking, problem-solving, managing difficult relationships, and seeking rejuvenation/renewal in building additional resources and support. The authors conclude that resilient teachers demonstrated agency in the process of overcoming adversity.

A recent review by Beltman et al. (2011) of studies related early career teachers' resilience has shown that resilience is the outcome of a dynamic relationship between individual risks and key individual protective factors. The authors identified individual attributes such as altruistic motives and high self-efficacy as key individual protective factors. Different sources for contextual supports and contextual challenges were identified such as school administration, colleagues and pupils. In a study in the US, Bruneti (2006) found that teachers

who remain in inner city classrooms for more than 12 years were resilient and able to overcome difficult challenges. Three main factors were identified: the students; professional and personal satisfaction; and support from administrators, colleagues and the organization of the school.

Similarly, Beltman et al. (2011, p. 196) state that resilience is a “complex, idiosyncratic and cyclical construct, involving the dynamic processes of interaction over time between person and environment” and it “is evidenced by how individuals respond to challenging or adverse situations and the contexts in which they work have been shown to provide both protective and risk factors”.

Also, a recent review of existing literature on veteran teachers reveals that most of the studies focused on veteran teachers’ resilience and that issues concerning veteran teachers’ identities are key to understanding why they remain in the profession and are able to sustain their motivation and commitment over time (Carrillo and Flores, in press). Their sense of vocation, the relationships with the students and support from school administration and colleagues contributed positively to their identities and to their feelings of self-efficacy. Conversely, the increasing measures of accountability, problematic classroom management, adverse personal factors, excessive paperwork and heavy workload impacted negatively on their identities. The authors also state that veteran teachers were able to build on their confidence regarding their professional competence and relied on internal and external factors to maintain their commitment to teaching. The role of emotions in the transformation of veteran teachers’ identities and the permeable boundaries of the contexts were also identified.

Key issues in teacher professionalism in challenging times

Recent literature on teacher professionalism has highlighted its complex and dynamic nature which relates not only to policy environment but also to the ways in which teachers see themselves as professionals and the conditions for them to exercise their profession. In general, issues such as intensification and bureaucratization, increased forms of managerialism, and greater accountability and public scrutiny are but a few examples of the changes in the teaching profession identified in the literature (Day, 1999; Helsby, 2000; Osborn, 2006; Day, Flores and Viana, 2007; Kelchtermans, 2009; Flores, 2012). This situation has implications for teachers' sense of professionalism and for their professional identities as it impacts upon the ways in which they experience their daily work at school as well as their public image in society.

In many countries, teachers' work became characterized by 'ruptures rather than continuities' (Carlgren, 1999, p.44). Issues such as the existence of greater control over teachers' work and performance of schools (Ball, 2003) through accountability mechanisms leading to more pressure upon schools and teachers to increase standards of teaching, learning and achievement (Osborn, 2006; Day and Smethem, 2009), a culture of managerialism and performativity (Ozga, 2000) and standardization and overregulation (Hargreaves, 2003) of teaching and teachers' work have been widely discussed internationally. Such changes in teaching and in teachers' work have led to a decrease in their motivation, job satisfaction and sense of professionalism leading to feelings of tiredness (Flores, 2012), teacher stress, fatigue and burnout (see, for instance, Esteve, 1991; Flores, 2014). Looking at the opportunities and threats in teaching, amongst other features, Hargreaves and Fullan (2012, p. 43) noted that there was "more interactive professionalism among teachers" but they also warned that it "can turn into hyperactive professionalism as teachers are thrown into hurried meetings to

devise quick-fix solutions that will lead to instantaneous gains in student achievement results”.

In a nationwide survey carried out in Portugal, in which 2,702 teachers participated, Flores, Ferreira, and Parente (2014) concluded that recent policy initiatives associated with a context of austerity and economic crisis, led to a decrease in teachers’ motivation, to greater control of their work, to an increase of their workload and bureaucracy and to a deterioration of their working conditions including their social economic status. The same nationwide study also indicated that teachers have been subject to greater public scrutiny and that the image of teaching and teachers in the media has contributed to the deterioration of the teaching profession.

It is within this context that the study reported in this chapter was carried out framing resilience as a key factor to analyze the ways in which teachers perceive changes in their profession and working conditions in adverse times.

The context and design of the study

This chapter reports on data drawn from a broader 3-year piece of research (January 2011-June 2014) funded by *Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia* (National Foundation for Science and Technology) (PTDC/CPE-CED/112164/2009) aimed at examining existing conditions for teacher leadership and professional development in challenging circumstances. A mixed-method research design was devised (see Table 1).

Table 1: Phases and methods of data collection

PHASES	METHODS	PARTICIPANTS
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PHASE I		
February-April 2012	Online survey nationwide	2702 teachers
		11 schools
PHASE II		
November 2012 - April 2013	Semi-structured interviews	11 headteachers
	Focus group	45 focus groups * 99 teachers * 108 students
PHASE III		
May 2013 – May 2014	Professional development courses Questionnaires with open-ended questions Portfolios Reflective tools Artefacts Reflective journals	5 schools 66 teachers

The project included three phases of data collection, including a national survey in which 2702 teachers participated (phase I); semi-structured interviews to principals in 11 schools located in different regions of the country; focus group to 99 teachers and focus group to 108 students (phase II) and a professional development programme in 5 schools located in northern Portugal, in which 66 teachers participated (phase III). In this chapter data from phases I and II will be reported. Phase I was carried out between February and April 2012 and phase II was conducted between November 2012 and April 2013.

The economic and financial crisis that has been affecting several sectors in the Portuguese society has led to increases in unemployment, salary cuts, and higher taxes. These have impacted upon teachers and the teaching profession. Along with these are also changes at a policy level amongst which are new mechanisms for teacher evaluation; new protocols

for school governance; reduction in the school curriculum; introduction of national exams from the primary school upward, etc. In general, more pressure is placed on schools and teachers to increase teaching standards and student achievement. In addition, changes in their workload and working conditions have been implemented. Drawing from the major research project, this chapter addresses the following research questions:

1. How do Portuguese teachers view their experience as teachers in current challenging circumstances?
2. How do they describe the contexts in which they work?
3. What kinds of factors influence their resilience and professionalism in adverse times?

Participants

In total, in phase I, 2702 teachers from mainland Portugal responded to the questionnaire which was administered online: 78.5% were female. Also, 42.8% of the participants were between 40-49 years old, 28.6% were between 50-59 years old and 25.5% were between 30-39 years old. Only 1.7 were between 20-19 years of age. As far as the qualifications of the teachers participating in the study are concerned, the majority of them hold a *Licenciatura* degree (59.3%) and 21.4% hold a master's degree (21.4%). The majority of the participants have between 11 and 20 years of experience (37.6%) and between 21 and 30 years (34.9%). Most of the participants have between 1-10 years of experience in their present school (65.8%). Also, the vast majority of the participants have a permanent post at school (83.3%). In addition, the majority of the participants taught in urban schools (51.1%) and in all levels of teaching (from pre-school to secondary school: 3 to 18 year-old students).

Most teachers taught in 3rd cycle (41.9%) (students aged 12-15) and in secondary education (33.2%) (students aged 16-18).

As far as the 99 teachers participating in the focus group are concerned, the vast majority of them were female teachers (76.8%). As for their age, 31.3% were between 51 and 60 years old and 27.3% between 41 and 50 years old. The participating teachers came from all levels of teaching, from pre-school to secondary school, and taught various subject matters. In regard to their experience as teachers, 36.4% have between 21 and 30 years of service, 26.3% between 31 and 40, and 22.2% between 11 and 20 years of experience. In general, the age of the teachers participating in the survey and in the focus group is in line with the “General profile of the teachers 2014/2015” published by the Ministry of Education (Direção-Geral de Estatísticas da Educação e Ciências, July 2016). According to these statistics, only 1.4% of the Portuguese teachers are younger than 30 years of age.

Data collection and analysis

A nationwide survey was conducted through an online questionnaire (using the surveymonkey device) which was sent to the principals of all elementary and secondary schools in mainland Portugal. The questionnaire was then distributed to the teachers in each school. Permission for administering the questionnaire in public schools was previously obtained from the Ministry of Education. The questionnaire was devised by the authors based upon earlier work (see Day, Flores and Viana, 2007 and Flores, Day and Viana, 2007). It included both closed and open-ended questions according to two main dimensions: i)

motivation and job satisfaction (including questions about current motivation, areas in which teachers experienced the greatest increase in satisfaction and the most dissatisfaction, etc.); and ii) leadership, autonomy and school culture (factors that hinder or promote teacher leadership, opportunities and motives for engaging in professional development opportunities, etc.). In order to analyse further issues of teacher professionalism associated with the effects of policy initiatives on teachers' work arising from the quantitative data, focus group were carried out with 99 teachers in 11 schools throughout the country. Each focus group comprised 3 to 7 participants. Teachers participating in the focus group were recruited by the headteacher in each of the 11 participating schools. All of them were volunteers. The focus group protocol aimed at analysing in a deeper way preliminary findings arising from the survey data but it also aimed at giving voice to teachers to talk about their experience as teachers in challenging circumstances especially in regard to the ways in which their professionalism has been affected. The focus group protocol included questions related to perceptions of school culture and leadership, changes in teachers' work, and issues related to being a teacher and teaching as a profession. The focus group were conducted in each of the schools by at least two researchers participating in the wider research project.

Quantitative data were analysed statistically with the use of SPSS (version 20). The process of qualitative data analysis was undertaken according to two phases: an analysis of data gathered in each school through the voices of teachers, students and the principal. A second phase was then carried out according to a comparative or horizontal analysis (cross-case analysis) (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In this phase, it was possible to look for common patterns as well as differences. A semantic criterion was used to look for key themes arising from the qualitative data by the research team. This chapter presents the main findings from the survey (phase I) and data from the focus group with teachers (phase II) in order to

illustrate quantitative data. The tables come from phase I and the qualitative data are drawn from the focus group.

Findings

In this chapter key findings are presented according to three main key themes: i) changing teaching contexts: massive legislation and deterioration of working conditions; ii) working in challenging contexts: motivation and sense of vocationalism ii) resilience, professionalism and identity.

Changing teaching contexts: massive legislation and deterioration of working conditions

Teachers reported the adverse times and challenging circumstances in Portugal as a result of the economic and financial crisis with implications for Education in general and for teachers' work in particular which is line with previous empirical work (Flores and Ferreira, 2016). They spoke of salary cuts, higher taxes, and unemployment affecting teaching in particular. Added to this are changes in the policy environment with massive legislation which impacted upon a wide range of dimensions in Portuguese schools, namely new mechanisms for teacher evaluation; new protocols for school governance; reduction in the school curriculum; and the introduction of national exams from the primary school upward. In general, teachers felt that more pressure has been placed upon schools and upon them in order to increase teaching standards and student achievement: "Bureaucratic procedures (...) administrative and bureaucratic records have been increasing in recent years"; "I see my work a bit of in a

schizophrenic way. It is really how I feel. You have to comply with curricula and programs and all the paperwork that is required... it is difficult to manage it.”

Along with this is the deterioration of the teaching profession which, according to the participants, is due, at least to a certain extent, to the negative image of teaching and teachers in the media (90% agree and strongly agree): “Our image as teachers has been deteriorated in terms of social recognition and economic status.”; “My main concerns relate to the crisis and its effects in the school (number of students per class, workload, changes in curriculum, etc.)”; “Your work as a teacher has been more and more technical and bureaucratic, and it does not leave room for creativity and innovation.”

	Strongly agree/agree	I don't agree nor disagree	Disagree/strongly disagree
Teacher individualism has increased.	50.3% (916)	25.1 % (464)	24.2 % (439)
Teachers' workload has increased over the past three years.	96.7% (1772)	2.3% (43)	1% (18)
The bureaucracy in teaching has increased.	95.4% (1752)	2.9% (54)	1.7% (31)
There was an increase of teachers' public accountability.	74.6% (1371)	19.8% (363)	5.6% (103)
There was an accentuation of criticism to teachers.	92.2% (1694)	5.9% (109)	1.9% (35)
There was greater control over teachers' work.	75.6% (1383)	17.4% (318)	7% (129)

Table 2. Changes in teachers' perceptions of their work (2009-2012)

By and large teachers claim that their working conditions deteriorated over the last few years including an increase in workload and in bureaucracy, greater public accountability and greater control over their work (see Table 2). The following quotes are illustrative of this:

Over the last years, there has been a negative image of teachers in the media and in the society in general... (Secondary school female teacher, 35 years of experience)

As a teacher you have to work harder, your workload has increased, bureaucracy has increased, paperwork has increased, etc. (Secondary school female teacher, 28 years of experience)

The most problematic factor is the news, the lack of safety and instability in economic terms, the reduction of the salary (...) you never know what tomorrow will bring (Secondary school female teacher, 21 years of experience)

All of these external factors have affected their sense of professionalism and their daily work in schools. Issues such as lack of motivation, tiredness, and disappointment emerged from their accounts. Teachers participating in both the survey and the focus group talk about the increasing challenges and demands that they have to deal with, stemming not only from the policy environment but also from the social, cultural and economic factors that have affected their work.

Working in challenging circumstances: motivation and sense of vocationalism

One of the issues which became very clear in teachers' accounts was their motivation as teachers. In the survey, they were asked about their current levels of motivation (in 2012). They reported that their motivation (in 2012) was moderate (45.5%), although 27.4% admit that their motivation was high and for 17.4% of the participants was low. Interestingly, when asked about their job satisfaction and motivation over the last three years (2009-2012) (during which major reforms in Education and in teaching have been put into place in schools), the majority of the participants reported that their motivation and their job satisfaction decreased (61.6% and 44.5%, respectively). Issues such as salary cuts, increase of bureaucracy, the deterioration of the social image of teaching, lack of motivation from the part of students, lack of valorization of school from the part of parents, lack of career prospects, along with massive legislation that has been published and recent policy initiatives were at the forefront of their accounts. Amongst the policy initiatives that have affected teachers' work are teacher evaluation, new system for school governance (the merging of schools in big clusters of schools), increase of number of pupils per class and of classes per teacher, the increase of workload, etc. However, some of the teachers, despite all the changes and challenges that they have to deal with in their schools, resist and try to become more resilient in order to keep their motivation and joy of teaching despite "all the things that go wrong in education". The following quotes illustrate this:

As a teacher you feel unmotivated with all that is going on in Education, but you need a positive attitude in order to motivate your students for learning. (Secondary school male teacher, 21 years of experience)

I try to make an effort to carry on keeping in mind the goal that has made me choose this profession, I mean, my students! (Elementary school female teacher, 22 years of experience)

As this last quote illustrates, teachers draw upon their sense of vocationalism (their commitment and willingness to make a difference in their students' lives) in order to face adverse contexts of teaching. In other words, what keeps teachers going, despite everything, are their students which became sources of motivation in challenging working contexts. The participating teachers in the focus group refer to external factors which lead to lack of motivation and dissatisfaction, such as policy initiatives, deterioration of working conditions, heavy workload, changes in teacher career (no career prospects), increase in bureaucracy, etc. But they also spoke of the ways in which they overcome the difficulties in their daily work focusing on their students and on the classroom practice:

There is heavy workload... Nowadays you need to do more in schools without fewer resources. This means extra work for you as a teacher... and you need to do your best against the odds. (Elementary school male teacher, 27 years of experience)

There is more and more paperwork and you have less time to devote to your students. (Primary school female teacher, 15 years of experience)

I try to focus on my students and on my work with them in the classroom. That is why I became a teacher in the first place! (Elementary school teacher, 16 years of teaching)

The context of economic and social crisis has impacted upon school and families and teachers are concerned with this situation and with its implications for their work which becomes even more demanding and tiring. They show concern with students' learning in more demanding and complex contexts of teaching which is in line with recent research (Flores & Ferreira, 2016).

Added to their efforts to keep themselves motivated as professionals and their focus on their students in adverse working conditions were their views of school culture and leadership which explain differences in teachers' accounts of resilience to which I now turn.

Resilience, professionalism and identity

Some teachers who participated in the research project were able to remain in teaching despite the heavy workload, the pressure in regard to student achievement and the massive changes in policy and school organization and governance. They claim that their willingness and motivation to continue to be a teacher is due to a great extent to their students ("what keeps me in teaching are my students"). This is to be related to teachers' sense of professionalism and their capacity for resilience, which are linked to their professional values as teachers and to their beliefs and sense of identity.

As a teacher you may lack motivation in regard to everything, to salary cuts, to what has been taken away from you, but as far as your work with the students is concerned and your family you do everything you can. You do your best.

(Elementary school female teacher, 17 years of experience)

All this [massive changes in legislation] leads to the lack of motivation. I don't feel that this has an impact on my work. It is a great concern but it doesn't affect my work as a teacher. (Secondary school female teacher, 21 years of experience)

I really enjoy being with the kids. Coming to school is not a pleasure to me anymore, but I still enjoy being with my students. (Female pre-school teacher, 33 years of experience)

It is professionalism that makes you do what you do and leading... nobody is able to deal with so much work... it is because teachers are professionals that they do what they do. (Elementary school male teacher, 33 years of experience)

This is in line with another question included in the survey. Teachers were asked about the most important dimensions of their work (see Table 3). They identified collaborating with colleagues (63.4%); supporting students (58.7%); reflecting on one's own work (51.1%); planning teaching (49.1%) and continuous professional learning (45.1%) as the most important ones (see Table 3). The least valued dimensions are: performing administrative tasks (7.5%); involvement within the local community (14.5%); developing teamwork (18.7%), using ICT (19.7%) and participating in decision-making process (19.7%).

	Frequency	%
Collaborating with colleagues	1140	63.4
Supporting students	1056	58.7
Reflecting on one's own work	919	51.1
Planning teaching	882	49.1
Continuous professional learning	810	45.1
Developing innovative practices	801	44.5
Monitoring student behaviour	801	44.5
Accessing educational resources	497	27.7
Communicating with parents	463	25.8
Participating in decision-making process	355	19.7
Using ICT	354	19.7
Developing team work	337	18.7
Involvement within the local community	260	14.5
Performing administrative tasks	134	7.5

Table 3 - Dimensions of teachers' work

Teachers responding to the survey identified “collaborating with colleagues” as the most important dimension of their work. However, and interestingly, they also agreed that over the last three years there was an increase in teacher individualism. In addition, “developing teamwork” and “participating in the decision making process” are amongst the least valued dimensions of teachers' work. There is ambiguity in their perceptions as if, on the one hand, they value collaboration with colleagues, on the other hand, they do not value as much teamwork and participation in the decision-making process. This ambivalence may be related to top-down initiatives in order for teachers to do (compulsory) meetings at school.

Issues of structural and comfortable collaboration (in many cases drawn from top down initiatives) and authentic collaboration (initiated and fostered by teachers themselves at school) might explain some of the findings (Hargreaves, 1998; Williams, Prestage, & Bedward, 2001).

Both internal and external factors explain teachers' resilience and sense of professionalism. They spoke of issues such as joy of teaching, commitment to students' learning, willingness to grow professionally despite the negative and less encouraging external working environment, but they also talk about the positive "ethos" of their workplace, supportive and encouraging leadership, trust and positive relationships with colleagues. In fact, the importance of relationships in teaching was at the forefront of their accounts:

Maybe you learn more when you have a chat with a colleague in the staffroom having a cup of tea or coffee rather than in those compulsory in-service activities that you have to do in order to get credits... but your day-to-day experience is important... trying to figure out what and why you are doing so and so. This is very important for your professional growth as a teacher as well as sharing materials with colleagues and working closely with them. (Secondary school female teacher, 33 years of experience)

For me what is important is the relationship with colleagues... working together. Then you also have those training activities, but in my view what promotes professional development is really the relationship and interaction with colleagues, working together, sharing, etc. (Secondary school female teacher, 33 years of experience)

In other words, in teachers' accounts it was possible to identify issues of professionalism (in which care, dedication and commitment to learning were key elements) and a sense of identity with clear images of themselves as professionals with strong professional values and awareness of their role in making a difference in their students' lives. In other words, despite the negative policy environment and the deterioration of their working conditions they remain committed to their students and to the social and moral purposes of teaching which, in turn, relates to their sense of vocationalism. They have clear and strong ideas about what it means for them to be a teacher, which relate to their professionalism and sense of identity and, thus, to their capacity for being resilient in the adverse contexts in which they work.

Discussion and conclusion

Existing literature suggests that teacher resilience is a construct that is relative, developmental and dynamic; it is socially constructed and depends on personal and professional dispositions as well as on contextual factors. It entails a sense of purpose and meaningful actions particularly in adverse circumstances (Day & Gu, 2014) as it is the case of Portuguese teachers over the last few years. The present study adds to existing literature in shedding additional light upon the factors that influence teachers' capacity to be resilient (Gu, 2014), not only in their early stages, as much of extant literature focuses on (see, for instance, Mansfield, Beltman, and Price, 2014; Johnson et al, 2015), but in all phases of the teaching career, especially experienced teachers, and particularly in adverse circumstances. It is important not only to look at teacher attrition and resilience in the early years of the teaching,

especially in countries in which there is a teacher shortage, but also to all phases of the teaching career, particularly veteran teachers, and focusing on what keeps them motivated in their job and why they remain in teaching despite the increasing challenges and changes in their working conditions.

By and large, issues such as bureaucracy, intensification, the deterioration of social image of the teaching profession, unemployment amongst teachers due to the financial and economic crisis, endless reforms in Education (such as external evaluations for teachers, schools and students) are amongst the external factors that account for teachers lack of motivation and dissatisfaction. However, internal factors such as teacher collaboration, classroom work and the relationship with students were identified as key factors and sources of personal and professional motivation which help teachers remain in the teaching profession despite everything. This is in line with earlier empirical work which has shown devotion to students, pursuit of personal and professional fulfilment and support from administration, colleagues and the organization of the school as key elements in understating teacher resilience (Brunetti, 2006). Other studies have highlighted the importance of internal factors such as autonomy and personal involvement on teachers' levels of job satisfaction in detriment to externally imposed measures (Butt et al, 2005).

The study reported in this chapter has demonstrated that teachers' strong professional values, their sense of professionalism and their capacity for resisting and for being resilient (despite negative policy environment, and the challenging social and economic context) as well as their sense of identity as teachers emerged from the data in explaining the ways in which some teachers became more resilience than others. This is in line with Day and Gu's (2014, p. xvii) idea of "persistence of hope and endeavor among teachers to do their best" and their notion of "everyday resilience". The authors stress that "being a resilient teacher goes beyond

mere survival on an everyday basis. Teaching to their best across a career span of 30 years or more requires that teachers are able to exercise “everyday resilience” that classroom conditions inherently demand.”

In this chapter the factors and sources of teacher motivation and job satisfaction were analyzed in challenging contexts ranging from feelings of frustration and low morale to resilience and professionalism. In particular, the “relational resilience” (Day & Gu, 2014) was explored in the light of evidence from the study taking into account the context of teacher intensification, lack of trust, worsening of teaching conditions, lower social and economic status and the legislative “tsunami” that has invaded schools and teachers’ work.

Teachers’ accounts in this study point to issues that are related to the assumption of their professionalism, in particular issues of commitment, engagement, care and attention to pupils. This may be associated with their resilience which in turn relates to school culture and leadership, a sense of vocationalism, and strong beliefs and professional values as teachers. As Gu and Day’s study (2007, p. 1314) demonstrated, “underlying resilient teachers endeavors to exert control over difficult situations is their strength and determination to fulfil their original call to teach and to manage and thrive professionally”.

Issues of commitment, professionalism, professional identity and professional values need to be taken into account in order to understand differences in teacher resilience. As such, professional development opportunities as well as conditions for teachers to exercise their professionalism in supportive and encouraging school cultures are of paramount importance if teachers are to be resilient, motivated and engaged in their profession. Also relevant are opportunities for teachers to develop their sense of vocationalism, their values as professionals and their views of teaching and learning as well as their care for the students, as this study also demonstrated. Gu and Day (2007) identified professional assets for

teachers, namely sustaining a sense of vocation (teaching as more than just a job) and developing a sense of efficacy as a key component of teacher resilience. The authors also identified the influence of external factors such as external policy contexts and school contexts. In other words, Gu and Day (2007, p. 1314), reiterate that resilience is determined by “the *interaction* between the internal assets of the individual and the external environments in which the individual lives and grows (or does not grow)” (original emphasis).

This study, which took place in especially challenging circumstances, provided evidence of the multidimensional, dynamic and complex nature of teacher resilience. Not only does it relate to issues of teacher commitment, self-efficacy, effectiveness and agency, as earlier research has demonstrated (Gu & Day, 2007; Day & Gu, 2009; Mansfield et al. 2012; Mansfield et al., 2014; Ebersöhn, 2014; Vance et al., 2015), but it is also dependent upon teachers’ professional values, their sense of professionalism and their identity as teachers as well as the contextual factors that hinder or support the exercise of their profession. Resilient teachers spoke of positive atmosphere at school, encouraging leadership and supportive colleagues, but they also claim that their remaining in teaching is to be related to their strong professional values as teachers, to their sense of vocationalism and to their professionalism and identity as teachers. Despite the limitations of this study, as resilience was not its main focus and as it relies on teachers’ self-perceptions, it contributes to better understanding teachers’ work in challenging circumstances, particularly experienced teachers as they make sense of the tensions and challenges in their daily work. Findings have implications for teacher education, particularly for in-service teacher education and professional development providers. Creating spaces for teachers to discuss and build their professionalism, to share and discuss the core features of their work and of their professional values and identities as

teachers as well as to frame and interpret their current working conditions in a context of greater accountability and performativity becomes a key issue for professional development providers if teacher resilience is to be fostered.

This study supports earlier work on teacher resilience, for instance, Day and Gu (2014, p. 11) when they advocate for resilience as a relational concept which “recognizes the interactive impact of personal, professional and situated factors on teachers’ work and lives and contextualizes teachers’ endeavors to sustain their professional commitment”. The relational and affective dimension of teaching was highlighted in teachers’ accounts and it was of paramount importance as a key source of motivation (despite the external factors leading to lack of motivation such as lack of career prospects, salary cuts, worsening of working conditions and unemployment), resilience and hope in teaching.

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