Teacher-subject and their identity: reflections on faculty development in Higher Education[1]

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ABSTRACT

This article seeks to understand aspects of the development of teaching identity in higher education professors without initial degrees in Pedagogy or a teaching degree. The research is based on studies on identity, teacher education, professionalism, teaching knowledge, and critical reflection. Data were collected from seven professors at a federal public university in São Paulo and analyzed using Discourse Analysis (DA). The results reveal the influence of family members and teachers in career choice, the pursuit of professional acceptance in the face of the "all-knowing" teacher myth, the lack of institutional support at the beginning of the teaching career, and the redefinition of assessment processes as a stimulus for reflection and changes.

KEYWORDS: Teacher education; Teacher identity; Teaching knowledge; Higher Education; Discourse Analysis.

O sujeito-professor e sua identidade: reflexões sobre a formação docente no Ensino Superior

RESUMO

Este artigo busca compreender aspectos do desenvolvimento da identidade docente de professores do Ensino Superior sem formação inicial em Licenciaturas ou Pedagogia. A pesquisa fundamenta-se em estudos sobre identidade, formação docente, profissionalidade, saberes docentes e reflexão crítica. Os dados, coletados junto a sete professores de uma universidade pública federal de São Paulo, foram analisados por meio da Análise de Discurso (AD). Os resultados revelam a influência de familiares e professores na escolha da carreira, a busca por aceitação profissional diante do mito do professor "sabe-tudo", a falta de suporte institucional no início da trajetória docente e a ressignificação dos processos avaliativos como estímulo à reflexão e a mudanças.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Formação de professores; Identidade docente; Saberes docentes; Ensino Superior; Análise de Discurso.

El sujeto-profesor y su identidad: reflexiones sobre la formación docente en la Educación Superior

RESUMEN

Este artículo busca comprender aspectos del desarrollo de la identidad docente de profesores de Educación Superior sin formación inicial en Profesorado o Pedagogía. La investigación se basa en estudios sobre identidad, formación docente, profesionalidad, saberes docentes y reflexión crítica. Los datos, recolectados de siete profesores de una universidad pública federal de São Paulo, fueron analizados mediante el Análisis del Discurso (AD). Los resultados revelan la influencia de familiares y profesores en la elección de la carrera, la búsqueda de aceptación profesional ante el mito del profesor "que lo sabe todo", la falta de apoyo institucional al inicio de la trayectoria docente y la resignificación de los procesos de evaluación como estímulo para la reflexión y el cambio.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Formación de professores; Identidad docente; Saberes docentes; Educación Superior; Análisis del Discurso.

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"No one starts being an educator on a certain Tuesday at four in the afternoon. No one is born an educator or predestined to become one. We become educators through practice and reflection upon that practice.".
Paulo Freire

Introdução

This article was prepared with the purpose of succinctly disseminating the results of a doctoral research study[3]. The concerns that gave rise to the research question and its objectives emerged from spontaneous dialogues between the author, students, and professors at the higher education institution where she works as a public servant. These conversations consistently reflected a shared unease: uncertainties about the identity of the university professor and the perception of a lack of didactic and pedagogical training. The identity formation of higher education teachers thus became a central focus in the literature review, and the scarcity of research on the topic highlighted the relevance of the study. Morosini (2000) points out the limited production of research on identity and teaching in higher education. According to Larocca and Tozetto (2016), between 1996 and 2013, only 54 dissertations addressed teacher education in graduate programs in Education—most of them focused on basic education. In turn, Franchi and Habold (2019), after analyzing 115 abstracts presented at ANPEd between 2011 and 2017, identified only 11 studies on the topic. In 2017, none of the abstracts addressed teacher education in higher education.

Considering the above, this study aimed to understand the identity formation process of higher education teachers who did not have an initial degree in Teaching or Pedagogy. This is a qualitative, narrative-based study conducted with seven professors from the Federal University of ABC (UFABC) who, despite lacking this initial training, participated in continuing education courses offered by the institution.

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To achieve the proposed objectives, data collection encompassed personal, professional, and institutional aspects of the teaching trajectory and was carried out in three distinct stages: (1) questionnaires featuring teaching practice cases[4]; (2) analysis of academic memoirs[5] submitted during the university entrance selection process; and (3) semi-structured interviews[6]. The data analysis was conducted using Discourse Analysis (DA), based on the theoretical and methodological frameworks of Pêcheux (1995) and Orlandi (2005, 2009).

The theoretical framework of this study encompasses research on the subject and identity (Hall, 2000, 2006; Candau, 2014; Dubar, 1997, 2009); teacher education, with a focus on studies related to higher education (Nóvoa, 1995, 1997, 2000, 2017; Pimenta; Anastasiou, 2005; Soares; Cunha, 2010); professionalism and professionalization (Sacristán, 1995; Roldão, 2005, 2008); teaching knowledge (Tardif, 2002; Tardif; Raymond, 2000); and the understanding of the reflective practitioner (Schön, 1983, 1997; Zeichner; Liston, 2014).

Before proceeding, it is important to clarify the use of the term "teacher-subject" in this study. Inspired by Eckert-Hoff (2008), we use this expression not to refer to a specific individual, but to a historical and ideological subject, constituted through symbolic constructions and in constant transformation. We understand this subject as someone "in formation," since, as Beillerot (1988, p. 34) states, "training is a continuous process, a movement that does not occur at a given moment, but within the intertwined time of life, in a lasting unfolding".

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[4] Teaching practice cases are situations that emerge throughout the entire teaching process—fictional or not—at any educational level and in all roles performed by the teacher, whether in the teaching-learning process, in research, in exchanges with peers, unions, and society, in interactions with superiors, in the exercise of administrative duties related to the profession, in the ethical and political positioning required by their role, among other responsibilities that fall to them, depending on the level of education in which they are involved (Lupia, 2023).

[5] The academic memoir is one of the required documents submitted by candidates applying for a tenure-track Assistant Professor (Level I) position in higher education at the Federal University of ABC, as outlined in Public Notice No. 96, dated August 8, 2013.

[6] The interview script was developed based on the research objectives, respecting the theoretical foundation and the theoretical-methodological framework adopted. It was divided into four blocks of questions, named: Pre-professionalization, Professionalization, Professionalism, and Open.

A Brief Note on the Theoretical Framework

A study focused on understanding the identity formation of subjects must clearly define the concepts of subject and identity. For this purpose, we draw on Hall's (2000, 2006) postmodern notion of the subject, which describes the postmodern subject as having a decentralized, fragmented identity composed of different "selves" that relate to a central "self," subject to constant transformation. This conception aligns with the assumptions about the subject in Discourse Analysis (DA), the theoretical and methodological framework chosen for the analysis.

Regarding identity as it relates to the teaching profession, we draw on the work of Nóvoa (2000, p. 16), who describes identity as "a space of struggles and conflicts, where ways of being and acting within the profession are constructed." Following this line of thought, we refer to Joël Candau (2014), whose studies on professional identity emphasize that it is not limited to the memorization and mastery of technical skills, but is inscribed in the bodies of individuals. Finally, turning our attention specifically to higher education teachers, we align ourselves with Zabalza et al. (2018), who portray university teaching as a complex activity, using the expression "identity backpack" to illustrate it. According to the authors, it is in this backpack that the teacher carries all the identities required to perform their roles in higher education: teacher, researcher, program coordinator, department head, among other roles demanded by the academic career.

Pimenta and Anastasiou (2005) highlight higher education teaching as a "solitary" activity that, however, should be "solidary." According to the authors, this is because professors bring with them the experiences accumulated during their own education as students. Upon entering a higher education institution without proper didactic or pedagogical training

and without institutional support, these professionals often seek ways to develop on their own or simply reproduce what they consider correct based on their experiences as students.

Soares and Cunha (2010), in their studies on the beginning of university teaching careers, share a similar perspective. However, they emphasize that these subjects should not be passive, uncritical, or lacking in knowledge and beliefs about university teaching. The authors argue that professors construct a representation of teaching based on their experiences as university students, influenced by observing the behavior of their own professors in the classroom and by their interactions with students.

A teacher's knowledge is not limited to their initial education and should not be understood in a fragmented way, but rather holistically. In this context, several studies have been conducted to identify which types of knowledge are essential for teaching practice and how teachers acquire them. Among these approaches, we adopt Tardif's (2002) concepts to analyze teaching knowledge and explore how it influences the construction of the teacher's professional identity.

Reflection in and on classroom practice is a fundamental part of teacher education. The link between the professional and their ability to reflect on their actions is essential for continuous learning and for establishing a distinctive mark in professional practice (Schön, 1983). In addition to reflecting on their own development within the profession, it is crucial that teachers remain attentive and critical of the educational context, including the various actors involved, the policies governing the educational process, and the institutions in which it takes place. According to Zeichner and Liston (2014), the quality of teaching, regardless of the teacher's competence, depends not only on individual training but also on a range of external factors that must be taken into account.

Methodology

In qualitative research, by collecting descriptive data, researchers examine the world in depth, recognizing that every detail has the potential to offer valuable insights into the object of study (Bogdan; Biklen, 1994). As Stake (2011) also observes, the characteristics of qualitative research—interpretive and personalist in nature—are aligned with our expectations. The interpretive approach focuses on the meanings of human relationships from different perspectives, while the personalist aspect emphasizes empathy and the understanding of individual perceptions. Furthermore, the narrative approach is collaborative, allowing researchers to gather personal stories that reveal insights into identity and perspective. Narratives are rooted in specific contexts and serve as a valuable tool for capturing unique experiences and details (Gibbs, 2009; Creswell, 2014).

The theoretical and methodological framework adopted for the analysis of the discourse excerpts is the French Discourse Analysis (DA), as proposed by Pêcheux (1995). This approach emerges from the intersection of Saussurean linguistics, historical materialism, and psychoanalysis, and its object of study is discourse. For Pêcheux (1995), discourse is not limited to a simple transmission of information between A and B, but rather constitutes, more broadly, an "effect of meaning" between these points. According to Orlandi (2009), such "effects of meaning" involve processes of subject identification, argumentation, subjectivation, and the construction of reality. The excerpts selected for analysis are referred to as discourse excerpts (DEs). It is important to emphasize that, in this context, discourse is materialized in language, and the analyses must take into account the conditions of production, as conceptualized by Pêcheux (1995). In line with the subject conceptions previously presented, the subject in DA is understood as a social and discursive construction in constant formation, viewed as a "position" or "place," consistent with what was described by Foucault (1987, 2008).

Pêcheux (1995) introduces a fundamental concept in Discourse Analysis: ideology. Within the perspective of discursivity, ideology is understood as the "interpretation of meaning in a certain direction, determined by the relationship between language and history in its imaginary mechanisms" (Orlandi, 2005, p. 31). In this context, the social imaginary plays a mediating role in the subject's relationship with their conditions of existence, establishing the necessary connections between thought, language, and the world (Orlandi, 2005).

On the data and the discourse excerpts

The data were collected during the period of social isolation imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Initially, ten professors were contacted via email, and seven agreed to participate. Between September and October 2020, a questionnaire featuring teaching practice cases was sent out, along with a request for each participant's academic memoir. The interviews, originally planned to take place in person, were conducted via Google Meet between August and November 2021. They were later fully transcribed and analyzed alongside the questionnaires and memoirs

Considering the theoretical framework, the research question, and the conditions of discourse production in the collected data, it was possible to identify incidences[7] that emerged from the analyzed material. For organizational purposes within this article, the results will be presented under subheadings, where some discourse excerpts and their respective analyses will be discussed.

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[7] Discourse Analysis (DA) is a discipline focused on tracking signals, clues, and signs (Ginzburg, 1989). Thus, it is from certain incidences in the data excerpts that the discourse excerpts to be analyzed emerge. These incidences refer to elements or patterns identified in the analyzed excerpts that are considered relevant to the study; they may include repetitions of words, expressions, recurring themes, specific grammatical structures, among other linguistic and/or discursive aspects.

The influence of family members and teachers on career choice

The analysis of data collected during the first part of the interviews, which addressed the period before the professionalization of the professors, revealed a narrative connecting the participants' life histories to the personal and school knowledge they acquired. According to Tardif (2002), this knowledge plays a crucial role in the constitution of teacher identity. Furthermore, the interaction of the interviewees with their family members and teachers highlighted two relevant aspects: the influence of living with relatives who work or have worked as teachers, and the transfer of familial affection to impactful teachers in their school trajectories.

Regarding the first aspect, four interviewees mentioned in their statements having lived with fathers, mothers, aunts, and sisters who were teachers. It is worth noting that at no point during the interview were they asked whether any family member was a teacher. These incidences in the discourse reveal what Candau (2014) refers to as genealogical/familial memory, emphasizing that it serves as a "structuring principle of the subject's identity in different forms" (Candau, 2014, p. 140).

Below are the discourse excerpts from subjects P1, P2, P4, and P6[8], for a brief analysis of these aspects related to the double exposure of the research subjects to the teaching profession:

> DE-P1: [...] and I uhh a lot of my *interest in teaching /* besides *my mother who was also a teacher* (P1, 2021, emphasis added).
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> DE-P2: [...] all of my / no / *almost all of my aunts/ my father's sisters/ are teachers* [...] nowadays I I I have // it's funny that nowadays I have a lot / I've had a lot more contact with those aunts of mine you know (P2, 2021, emphasis added).

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[8] To preserve the identity of the research participants, we used the letter P, for professor, followed by a number from 1 to 7 to identify them.

DE-P4: [...] *my father he was / he is / he was a university professor* and he uhh // he passed the the exam before even having his his PhD. (P4, 2021, emphasis added).

DE-P6: [...] So much so that I think *this also / also motivated me to pursue an academic career and become a teacher as well, you know / because of the experience, you know / and because of the interaction with amazing people and great teachers, you know / and also because I come from a family where I have five sisters and all of them are teachers, so (laughs) // so I also had a lot of that contact, you know, with sisters uh // giving private lessons at home, you know / talking about Education, you know / all that context of being a teacher / of being around school / of the school logic was always present in my daily life*. (P6, 2021, emphasis added).

The narratives of P1, P2, P4, and P6 highlight family memories that significantly influenced their future career choices. P1's mother, P2's aunts, P4's father, and P6's five sisters are all teachers. Regardless of whether they worked in basic or higher education, the unsaid within the discourse—which often communicates as much as, or more than, what is explicitly stated (Pêcheux, 1995)—reveals the influence of this initial contact with the teaching profession, even if unconsciously, stemming from individuals who were not part of their formal schooling, but rather part of their family environment. Tardif and Raymond (2000, p. 219) state that "family life and significant people within the family appear as a very important source of influence that shapes one's attitude toward teaching." Living with these relatives who were/are part of the educational field allowed children, nieces/nephews, and siblings to observe the backstage of the profession—lesson planning, test grading, and stories about professional experiences—all within the family context. We understand that these subject-teachers experienced a "double exposure to the profession," both as students and as family

members of teachers. In this sense, Oliveira and Barreto (2021) highlight in their studies that contact with mothers, aunts, and other teacher relatives, combined with a family-driven encouragement to study and, in some cases, to pursue teaching as a safe professional path, contributed to these individuals' inclination toward a teaching career.

The second aspect, the transfer of familial affection to teachers who were considered significant in their educational trajectories, emerged in the responses to the question: "Do you remember any important teacher[9] in your school years? Can you tell me a bit about them?" This question was part of the pre-professionalization block, which the researcher clarified at the beginning of the conversation with the professors. All of them spoke about teachers from basic education; however, what stood out was that four of them also mentioned college professors. In addition to mentioning them, the discourse excerpts revealed familial affection projected onto these teacher/professors who left a lasting impression during their time as students, not only through the affectionate adjectives used to describe these professionals, but also through discursive incidences of words such as "caring mom," "grandpa," "caring dad," and "paternal."

> DE-P1: [...] three teachers who really marked me / one is Aunt Rose, who worked with the little ones [...] Aunt Rose *was very patient, you know [...] she was an extremely caring person, you know / so I remember that warm, cozy feeling in the heart, you know, from those early school years* [...] the other two teachers who had a big impact on me uhh are much more recent / they're from… from college [...] Professor Sunflower, uhhh who is a little old man [...] also with *such patieeence, such politeeeenessss // and, like, a real desire to share what he knew, he shared it with such affection, with such a... it made you want to listen* [...] he had this huuuuge

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[9] The names of the professors were replaced with the names of flowers to protect both their identities and those of the research participants.

pleasure in teaching and I uhh a lot of my interest in teaching [...] in the third year of college [...] Professor Camellia, *she was my Pharmacology professor aaand she was my first uhh I say my first caring mom in science, you know, my first scientific research supervisor* [...] Teacher Rose, Aunt Rose [...] in my memory, she was a *caring mom*, you know, someone who cared for the children, uhhh wanted every child to feel part of the class, *to help, to be patient*, you know [...] Professor Sunflower is uhmmm the *grandpa everyone would love to have*, you know [...] a shining soul [...] a very *humble* person, very *wise*, he knew sooo much, and had such immense joy in teaching, like he uhhh the image of Professor Sunflower is the *grandpa everyone would love to have*, it's something incredible, a teacher, like, one of the best I've ever had. And Professor Camellia [...] *she's a caring mom, but she's the kind of mom who raises her child for the world* (P1, 2021, emphasis added).

DE-P2: [...] Teacher Carnation, my high school Math teacher [...] he was the kind of teacher that, whatever math topic we brought up to talk about with him, he spoke with *such incredible passion, you know / so he had this incredible passion* [...] another person I really admire was from college, my Organic Chemistry professor, Professor Amaranth, who was also my advisor for my undergraduate thesis / I did a research project with him, and he was just *[...] really engaging, like, I really liked the way he interacted with students* / the way he taught / *how attentive he was* // and something else that really stood out to me was how he was, like / he was kind of a *caring dad to the students*, you know / he had this this this this this closeness / *like a way of relating to students, kind of like a caring dad* (P2, 2021, emphasis added).

DE-P6: "I had a Math teacher, right, uh // from fifth to eighth grade, which is middle school here [...]. So he was *reaaally good / reaaally instructive, you know / he could turn something hard into something very simple*. He had a

different teaching approach, welcoming/ not that scary kind of thing [...] Physics teacher Lily [...] he was very *attentive* too, you know / [...] so there was always this / this / this perspective, let's say, of a *paternal reference* as well, you know, through the teacher. In higher education too [...] Professor Geranium, right / my research supervisor as well." (P6, 2021, emphasis added).

Monereo and Domínguez (2014) analyze the emotions involved in faculty identity in higher education, highlighting their connection to teacher-student interaction. These emotions are organized into three categories: motivation for teaching (interest, passion, boredom); social relationships with students and colleagues (empathy, affinity, antipathy); and self-assessment of teaching competence (pride, satisfaction, dissatisfaction).

When analyzing the discourse excerpts, it is possible to identify representations of emotions according to the three categories proposed by Monereo and Domínguez (2014). In the category of motivation for teaching, enthusiasm stands out through expressions such as "great pleasure in teaching," "passion," "love for teaching," and "incredible passion." In the category of social relationships, empathy is frequently conveyed through words like "patience," "attentive," "caring," and "welcoming." Finally, in the category related to teaching competence, feelings of satisfaction and recognition emerge in terms such as "humble," "wise," "instructive," and "very good."

An important observation emerged from the analysis: the recurring presence of emotions associated with family figures. P1, P2, and P6 used terms such as "mom," "caring mom," "grandpa," "grandpa," "caring dad," and "paternal reference." This phenomenon reflects a projection of emotions experienced with family members onto teachers who left a lasting impact on their academic journeys. These feelings, connected to influential teachers,

suggest the need to further explore this emotional projection within teacher-student relationships, a significant dimension in the construction of the participants' teaching identity.

The search for acceptance in the career, the haunting myth of the "all-knowing" professor, and the lack of institutional support in the early stages of the academic career

The analysis of discourse excerpts related to questions about the beginning of teaching careers revealed the key points outlined in this subsection, which are interconnected in the process of constructing teaching identity. In this context, the knowledge acquired through professional practice becomes embedded in the subject, becoming a constitutive element of their professional identity (Candau, 2014). Practice, understood as the relationship between the subject and their craft over time, emerged as a central theme in the participants' discourse, in which temporal markers such as "before" and "now" appeared frequently. These elements enabled an analytical focus on the excerpts where they occurred, confirming that "teachers' knowledge carries a strong temporal dimension, referring to the processes through which it is acquired over the course of a teaching career" (Tardif; Raymond, 2000, p. 226).

When asked about their first class as university instructors, six participants expressed a deep sense of discomfort, which was reflected in the use of negative adjectives and expressions. The one interviewee who did not explicitly express discomfort remained silent about the moment he began his higher education teaching career, answering the question instead with information about his first classes at UFABC, classes that took place years after the actual start of his career. Below are some of the negative adjectives and expressions that appeared in the analyzed discourse excerpts:

TABLE 01 - Adjectives/Expressions with Negative Connotation

Professor	Adjectives/Expressions with Negative Connotation
P1	Desparate; sooo insecure; dread; intense stress; complete charlatan; alone; insecure; helpless; total charlatan; bad; very painful.
P2	What a trap!; sweating like crazy; shaking sooo much; nervous; terrifying.
P3	Stomachache; felt really sick; felt sick; sweating so much; sweating buckets; cold sweat; chaos; horrible; nervous.
P4	Extreme tension; a lot of effort; tremendous effort; exhausted.
P6	Relatively nervous; big butterflies in the stomach; butterflies in the stomach.
P7	My fears; my mind went blank.

Source: The author (2024).

Through the analysis of discourse excerpts related to negative adjectives and expressions, it was possible to observe that the discomfort associated with such expressions leads us to a place of conflict within the participants' utterances, which is related to acceptance in the profession. This conflict emerges from the fact that the teacher-subject enters a classroom with the role of a teacher but does not feel like one, since they need to learn how to "be a teacher," having had a formative life focused on research. There is a pressure stemming from this conflict, intrinsically linked to the collective memory that sees the teacher as the one who knows everything and never makes mistakes. Thus, we can infer that issues of acceptance in the profession initially arise from internal conflicts within the subject, which shape their identity.

To illustrate what has been presented and to bring to the discussion a second moment, when external factors to the subject arise that reinforce these internal conflicts, below is P1's discourse excerpt (DE), followed by its analysis:

DE-P1: [...] I, I felt like a *complete charlatan uhhh because sometimes students would ask questions I didn't know how to answer* // and now I'm a bit more relaxed about not knowing the answers / but one thing is not knowing the answer when it's your area and you kind of know where to look / *another thing is not knowing the answer and not even knowing which book to consult / not knowing anyone you can knock on their door, right? / so like, who could I turn to? [...] so I was alone, right / insecure* and with the responsibility to teach // so that was *very painful* for me / that first semester // it really marked me, that start, the beginning at university [...] like, *I don't know, I felt helpless at first, right / helpless / I felt like a total charlatan* [...] I never want to go through that again [...] so yeah, that first semester *was really painful* (P1, 2021, emphasis added).

P1 uses the term "charlatan" twice to refer to himself, expressing how he perceived his own performance when he did not feel sufficiently prepared to teach during his first academic semester. The myth of the "know-it-all" teacher also appears as a shadow in his practice, leading him to consider himself an impostor for not being able to answer all the students' questions. These marks of the "all-knowing" remain so present in P1 that, in his discourse, it is possible to perceive that they still cause some discomfort: "and now I'm a bit more relaxed about not knowing the answers." The expression "a bit more relaxed" indicates that there persists a current concern with the fear of not knowing, even after more than a decade since that first semester. The "all-knowing" reflects an unconscious search for unity and completeness, an illusion that the subject creates to sustain his resistance, since he is fragmented (Hall, 2000, 2006).

If, at first, the discourse excerpt reveals the use of the term "charlatan" to address issues of professional acceptance arising from the subject's internal conflicts, expressions such as "alone," "helpless," and "very painful" introduce a reference to "solitary work." This concept, highlighted by Pimenta and Anastasiou (2005), characterizes the beginning of the teaching career in higher education. "Solitary work" can be understood as the result of external factors that impact the subject's identity formation. Institutions follow principles and guidelines that pay little attention to the need for initial teacher training, disregarding the fact that "professionals go to sleep as researchers and wake up as professors" (Pimenta; Anastasiou, 2005, p. 104).

We observed that this feature, referred to in our study as the "lack of institutional support" at the beginning of the teaching career, also appears in other excerpts, such as those from P2:

> DE-P2: [...] and then they told me like "hey, you're going to, going to, you'll be part of the teaching team and you'll be teaching Experimental Basis of Natural Sciences" / and I was like *"Uhm, that sounds cool, what's that course about?"* *"Oh, it's a lab-based course in Chemistry, Physics, Math"* and I was like *"What?" "Yeah, Chemistry, Physics, Biology, and Math"* and I was like *"Oh my God! What a trap!"* I'll have to teach what, Physics, I'll have to teach Math, then Biology" / *so I had no idea what to say in a class like that but I had to talk about math / I had to talk about fractals // man, that's hard* / even today I still have doubts / but I had to / I had to do it (P2, 2021, emphasis added).

The integration and support of faculty members in higher education have been widely investigated, as universities demand professionals capable of working across the triad of teaching, research, and community outreach. Professional integration is understood as the

period encompassing the first years of a faculty member in a new professional setting, typically marked by tensions arising from the need to act and assert oneself in an unfamiliar environment, factors that directly affect the process of professional socialization (Oliveira; Cruz, 2017). As pointed out by Dubar (1997), socialization implies recognizing oneself as part of a group, which involves demonstrating knowledge and practices and adopting symbolic codes. This process of social interaction leads to the internalization of norms and values throughout one's life trajectory, leaving in the individual's identity traces associated with professional practice and the context in which it takes place.

The Institutional Pedagogical Project (IPP) of UFABC, grounded in interdisciplinarity as its pedagogical foundation, is highlighted by Xavier (2015) as a self-proclaimed innovative model for adopting a systemic and flexible approach to address the challenges of the modern world. Some of the project's distinguishing features include professional mobility, the creation of innovative interdisciplinary degree programs, flexible and up-to-date curricula, an emphasis on scientific knowledge, and the encouragement of entrepreneurship. In this way, students have the opportunity to move across different disciplinary areas during their studies, while faculty members face the challenge of teaching courses that do not always align with their own fields of training or research. Even when familiar with the IPP, many questions arise during the process of integration into this diverse context, placing a dual burden on faculty: understanding UFABC as an institution, and simultaneously, understanding UFABC as an interdisciplinary space, external aspects that influence the identity formation of our participants. This challenge of adaptation becomes even more intense because the participants, during their own academic journeys, had never experienced an educational model similar to that of UFABC. This unfamiliarity generates a sense of displacement, which leads to tension and frustration, making the process even more complex.

Reframing assessment processes as a stimulus for reflection and changes

The recurring appearance of the linguistic-discursive markers "assessment" and "exam" in the teachers' responses to the questionnaire on teaching practice cases, as well as in the interview transcripts, led us to interpret the discourse excerpts in which these expressions emerged. It is important to clarify that these terms and their variations appeared spontaneously, without being prompted by specific questions on the topic. This phenomenon suggests the presence of "fragments of discourse that carry with them fragments of a socio-historical reality" (Coracini, 2003, p. 03), prompting us to investigate the effects of these processes on the constitution of the subjects involved.

We acknowledge the multiplicity of voices expressed in the representations — the imaginary formations — present in the subjects' discourses. These representations include images of themselves, other teachers, and the learning process itself, which have been shaped over time and through lived spaces. The construction of these images occurs both throughout the teachers' educational trajectories and through the definition of their historically attributed roles and responsibilities. These formations guide the subjects' discourse, consolidating their positions. According to Orlandi (2005), "position" refers to the way the subject attributes meanings to and through discourse. This positioning reveals the content and form of their speech, as well as the underlying ideological formations.

First, a high concentration of adjectives and expressions with negative connotations directly related to the terms "test" and "assessment" was observed, with a greater incidence associated with the term "test." Among the adjectives and expressions linked to "test" are "fear," "dread," "extreme nervousness," "rote memorization," "flushing," "cheating," "mistake," "mechanical," "trauma," "failure," and "exclusionary." Related to "assessment," adjectives and expressions such as "worry," "ghosts,"

"exclusionary," "demotivation," and "low average" appeared. Regardless of the term used, the professors' discourse revealed a perception of assessment tied to the traditional method (Luckesi, 2011).

According to Candau (2014), memory and identity are inseparable: they coexist and leave marks on the constitution of individuals. The experiences recounted regarding the evaluative process carry a connotation of fear and reprimand from the perspective of the subject-student. From the discourses analyzed in this research, it is evident that this perception impacted the professional identity of the professors, leaving marks that are reflected in their teaching knowledge (Tardif, 2002).

These teaching knowledges are connected to a shift in what they experienced as students and to what they consider unhealthy in the formative process of their own students. This change, as a constitutive process of these subjects and their practices, can be analyzed in the following discourse excerpts:

> DE-P2: [...] the student assessment process *has probably been the issue that worried me the most during my career as a professor// precisely for this reason I have been seeking training* regarding alternative assessment methods [...] because once we understand what the concept is, right, we start our assessment process differently/ we begin to reflect on what we want to know/ *what we are looking for when applying this assessment process, right/ the assessment process has always been one of my biggest ghosts, you know/ my whole life*/ but// but it was a moment of change [...] I, well, *I'm running after it/ but it's, it's, I think we don't know how to assess/ we don't know how to make a test, you know* (P2, 2021, emphasis added).
>
> DE-P7: [...] as a professor/ *especially in the last semesters I have been adopting continuous assessment* in all the courses I teach, including individual and group activities throughout

the course and without traditional exams [...] I think *I also have changed my way of teaching* to a style in which I feel more comfortable/ so, and and it's usually like this uhhh *I'm giving fewer tests/* I give lists/ assignments/ group work/ I always try uhhh to keep this contact with the students [...] so, I don't know/ sometimes *I was giving/ asking for too much every week/ I started to ease it up a bit/ putting a submission every 2 weeks and I think in this course now I'm applying more or less what I've been changing in the previous ones/* I didn't even give this assessment/ I don't know/ in the fifth week/ because I felt like I didn't really need to (P7, 2021, emphasis added).

In the discourse excerpts of P2 and P7, it is possible to notice that the participants are undergoing a process of change, and one of the main drivers of that change is the need to adapt their assessment practices to their teaching. When they state "I have been seeking training in alternative forms of assessment," "I'm running after it," "especially in the last semesters I have been adopting continuous assessment," "I think I also changed my way of teaching [...] usually like this uhhh I'm giving fewer tests," and "I'm applying more or less what I've been changing in the previous ones," we observe that the verbal phrases, with the main verbs in the present perfect continuous or present continuous, indicate an ongoing action that began in the past and continues into the present, characterizing a transformation in progress. This aligns with the studies of Sacristán (1995) and Roldão (2005, 2008), who conceive of teaching professionalism as a continuous, progressive, and lifelong process. Temporal markers such as "during my career," "during the year 2011," "to this day," "in the last semesters," and "throughout the course" reinforce this idea of the temporal continuity of professional development. Together with the influence of social factors, these elements indicate the (trans)formation of the teacher's professional identity (Dubar, 1997; Tardif, 2002).

The period during which the participants (re)shaped their assessment practices—and continue to do so—reflects an ongoing process of reflection on their teaching practices (Schön, 1983), as evidenced in statements such as: "when we understand the concept, our assessment process changes; we begin to reflect on what we want to know and what we are looking for through this assessment."

In P2's discourse excerpts, expressions such as "the issue that concerned me the most during my career" and "one of my biggest ghosts, my whole life" reveal the depth of the mark left by the assessment process on their professional identity. The subject exposes this "scar" when speaking about their teaching trajectory and then broadens the context to encompass experiences as a student. Terms such as "most" and "biggest" reinforce the intensity of this impact, while the alternation between first-person singular and plural highlights the complexity of the multiple "selves" that constitute and express themselves discursively.

According to Maldidier (2003), meaning is constructed historically, sustained by memory and what has already been said. In P2's discourse fragments, such as "we begin to reflect on what we want to know" and "we don't know how to assess," echoes of collective discourses from university colleagues can be heard. These statements express self-criticism of traditional assessment practices, aligning with Tardif (2002), who highlights the role of training and experience in shaping teaching identity. The utterances reveal P2's—and his colleagues'—efforts to redefine assessment, moving away from traditional methods and adopting approaches that prioritize understanding and continuous improvement.

Concluding Remarks

This article aimed to present the results of a doctoral research project that sought to understand aspects of the identity formation process of

higher education professors whose professional backgrounds did not include initial training in Teaching Degrees or Pedagogy.

The simultaneous experience within the field of Education, both as students in school and as family members (children or nieces/nephews) of teacher, suggests an inclination, although unconscious, toward choosing teaching as a profession. The affective dimension in the teacher-student relationship, combined with the influence of family members who work as educators, fosters a sense of security during formative years, which later reflects on professional development.

When discussing the beginning of their teaching careers, the participants conveyed a negative tone associated with their experiences, shaped by both internal and external factors that influence their identities. Internally, there is a process of acceptance intrinsic to the teaching profession, marked by the burden of the "all-knowing professor" myth. Externally, professional acceptance is affected by the lack of institutional support experienced by the participants at the start of their careers, a gap that continues to echo throughout their professional journeys. Additionally, the UFABC environment emerges as a significant factor in their teacher development. These conditions reinforce the characteristics of the "solitary work" described by Pimenta and Anastasiou (2005), especially during the initial stages of teaching.

Finally, through the analysis of the negative connotations associated with the terms "test" and "assessment" in the participants' discourse, it was possible to infer that their experiences with these practices during their own schooling left deep scars on their identities. Such experiences led the participants to develop a critical lens that directly influences their actions as professors, shaping their teaching identities and the ways in which they reframe teaching and learning processes.

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