

Professional integration in teaching: the experience of former PIBID students*

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Abstract

We discuss teacher training of former students of a teaching initiation program in their first years of professional integration. We begin with the assertion that, generally, teachers who are more broadly prepared and certified are more successful in teaching, instigating questions about how beginner teachers, from differentiated learning opportunities during initial training, experience the first years of teaching. The analysis turns to facts about the professional integration of former students of teaching initiation programs, specifically from the Institutional Program of Initiation to Teaching Scholarship (PIBID, in Portuguese) in Ceará. Methodology involved carrying out a survey with 263 former members of PIBID from two Higher Education Institutions (HEI) in Ceará. They are young adults with pre-vocational socialization, whose learning took place in a school trajectory marked by curricular experience in the public network. Effective teaching practice prevails among those surveyed (75.6%). Participating in PIBID allowed future teachers in this study, during initial training and professional integration, to face the profession's dilemmas more constructively, providing elements to recognize themselves as capable to endure challenges. Among them prevails a strong identification with teaching, except for a small group, who discover, with that experience and their first years in the profession, that they prefer to invest their effort into a profession that will grant them more advantages. Even in the face of adversities inherent to the demands of the career, they acknowledge being more prepared to confront the dilemmas in the first years of teaching.

Keywords

Professional integration – Beginner teachers – PIBID – Teacher training.

* English version by Ana Carla Ponte Nóbrega. The translator and the author take full responsibility for the translation of the text, including titles of books/articles and the quotations originally published in Portuguese

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Introduction

Discussing teacher training is what this article proposes, specifically that of teachers who were in programs that support teaching initiation in their first years of professional integration. This theme expresses itself as the bearer of many concerns, making it necessary to go in deeper search for answers in order to clarify the understanding of issues regarding the emblematic teacher training. Among them, there are those aiming to know: does having more training and, more importantly, training more similar to the future workplace, favor teacher practice, particularly for those beginning their careers?

Darling-Hammond (2014, p. 231, our translation) argues, based on the review of studies in the field, that, despite gaps in that context, teachers more “broadly prepared and certified” are exactly the ones who “[...] obtain, in general, better results and are more successful with students than teachers who don’t have that kind of training”.

Studies in that field, in the Brazilian context, stimulate questions about former students from teacher training courses who participated in differentiated learning opportunities during initial teacher training, presuming that they are bearers of more consistent references to handle aspects concerning teaching and learning more competently.

In these terms, it is important to acknowledge the responsibility of formative processes in preparing teachers to carry out, with the necessary competence, tasks demanded by pedagogical practice when accomplishing their teaching actions. This fact invites us to understand that learning that resulted from the nature of subjects taught and assimilated, as well as from the experiences lived during their personal and professional development, differentiates them as teachers. These assumptions lead us to problematize whether undergraduates who participate in programs involving teaching initiation actions have different training than other undergraduates who didn’t have access to experiences of that nature.

The concerns of research surrounding these discussions are expanded, extrapolating and evolving in regard to what it is to “learn to teach”, in the “[...] direction of asking about the processes through which teachers generate knowledge” and also knowing “which types of knowledge they acquire” (MARCELO, 1998, p. 51, our translation). This movement prompts us to scrutinize how beginner teachers develop in relation to professional integration and from whom they learn.

The idea of teachers’ professional integration is understood here as the time period delimitating the first years of the teacher in a new context of professional practice, crossed by tensions generated by the need to act and affirm oneself in an unknown environment, interfering in their professional socialization (CRUZ, 2018). Teachers in a situation of professional integration, be they experienced or beginners, are confronted with a new work reality (ALARCÃO; ROLDÃO, 2014) and experience doubts and demands that they need to learn how to handle. Thus, the idea of entering a previously unknown work context is key to the concept of professional integration.

Although entering the profession is a private deliberation by the teacher, it is a decisive moment in their life cycle for their permanence and relationship with education, especially for those beginning their career (up to five years of experience), the focus of

this analysis. Decisive because, as Mizukami (2013, p. 23, our translation) warns, “[...] teaching is a complex profession and, as the other professions, is learned. The processes of learning to teach, learning to be a teacher and developing professionally are slow”. For the beginner teacher, integration is even more delicate and challenging, because they experience a transition period between being a student and a teacher (GARCÍA, 1999; TARDIF, 2014) and a moment of “reality shock”, experiencing feelings of survival and discovery. All that stresses the new professional, but, at the same time, fosters intensive learning about their professional practice.

Supported by these inquiries, this work aims to discuss teachers in their first years of integration in education, being former students of a program that supports teaching initiation and, more precisely, directing our attention toward beginning educators who participated in PIBID in Ceará.

The research² that feeds our analyses: methodological aspects

The questions that propel this examination originate from broad investigation indicators, supported by CNPq, about professional integration of teachers who participated in programs for teaching initiation in Brazil³ – Pedagogical Residency, Literacy Scholarship, and Institutional Program of Initiation to Teaching Scholarship (PIBID, in Portuguese). It is in the latter, specifically in data about PIBID in Ceará of former students from two public HEI in the state, between 2009 and 2013, that we find the empirical elements to ground the qualitative analyses (STAKE, 2011; ANDRÉ, 1983) that support this text.

This broad investigation, it is important to clarify, in its first phase, carried out a survey (YIN, 2016) with former students from the three aforementioned initiatives, through self-declared virtual questionnaires using the *SurveyMonkey*⁴ platform, with the intention of reaching a larger number of participants, seeking elements about the relation between participation in teaching initiation programs and professional integration. The instruments had multiple-choice (19) or Likert-type scale (18) questions, and essay questions for free declarations (02). Application lasted between the months of February and April 2016, collecting data from nine different Brazilian states. Two campaigns were carried out to explain the scope and objectives of the investigation, stimulating participation, involving the collaboration of program coordinators, aiming to obtain broad participation of former students.

From that group, in Ceará, two public higher education institutions (PHEI) participated: one federal (PHEI1) and one state (PHEI2) institution. Overall, considering former students from the first PIBID cycle in the state (2009–2013) who graduated initial training in 2013 or 2014, virtual questionnaires were sent to 861 valid electronic addresses

2- The development of the investigation from which we obtained the data analyzed in this paper observed ethical procedures established for scientific research, with approval by the Committee of Ethics in Research under the number 1.735.857, in Plataforma Brasil.

3- The aforementioned programs, except PIBID, function exclusively in the state of São Paulo; Pedagogical Residency is an initiative originated at the Federal University of São Paulo (Unifesp, in Portuguese) and Literacy Scholarship is sponsored by the Secretariat of Education of the State of São Paulo.

4- <http://www.surveymonkey.com>

of former scholarship holders (582 from PHEI1; 279 from PHEI2), although only 263 responded (166 from PHEI1; 97 from PHEI2).

In this study, analysis focuses on the results in those two institutions, regarding former students from the PIBID Program in that period, in the state. In the following sections, their answers constitute the assessments of this discussion.

Who are the former PIBID students who participated in the study?

It is important to note that PIBID is a complementary program, associated with the Directorate of On-Site Basic Education (DEB, in Portuguese) from the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES, in Portuguese), which “[...] aims to foster teaching initiation, contributing for the advancement of teacher training at a higher education level and the improvement of the quality in public basic education in Brazil” (BRASIL, 2010, p. 4, our translation). One of the objectives lies in enabling the integration of future teachers into the context of the public education network, since the beginning of their academic education. They are granted teaching initiation scholarships, so that they can develop didactic-pedagogical activities, guided and overseen by teachers from higher education institutions (HEI) that are part of the program, in a partnership with basic education schools.

Ceará has participated in PIBID since its first edition, in 2007, when PHEI1 coordinated six subprojects. PHEI2 joined the program in 2009, when the participation possibilities for higher education institutions was expanded, no longer restricted to federal institutions. In following editions, the state recorded a growing movement in the participation of HEIs from Ceará in that initiative (FARIAS; JARDILINO; SILVESTRE, 2015), which, in this context and as an example of what is recorded nationally, is acknowledged by school managers, teachers and students as a distinctive and qualifying action in the education of future teachers (ANDRÉ, 2018).

The elements subsequently outlined allow us to constitute a picture of former PIBID students in this state, which helps to understand its relationship with the professional integration of those individuals in teaching.

In Ceará, former students from PHEI1 and PHEI2, relative to the first PIBID cycle in the state, are predominantly between 24 and 39 years old, therefore, they represent a group of young adults. In the first institution, no former students declared being 50 years old or older, and in the second institution, only one person declared being in that age group. They are young adults from ten teacher training courses – arts, biological science, physical education, geography, physics, history, languages, math, pedagogy, and chemistry. Only in PHEI1 there are former PIBID students in the arts field. Distribution of former students who answered the questionnaire regarding their undergraduate courses is relatively balanced, both among courses and institutions. They are former students who graduated from initial training less than five years before the research, with a higher incidence of the year 2014 – a movement identified both in PHEI1 (57.83% = 96) and in PHEI2 (59.79% = 58).

The participants of this study include, in the context of their education, a close relationship with the daily routine of public education, evidencing a pre-vocational socialization marked by learning, constituted by their schooling trajectories under intensive influence of curricular practice in the context of public school among this group of teachers, because 159 (60.46%) out of 263 participants related attending all of elementary and middle school at public institutions, even disregarding those who attended public schools for most of their education and those who studied at public schools for half their schooling. This trajectory, in which they were “exposed to a longer period of undirected observation regarding functions and tasks that they will carry out in the future” (MARCELO, 2009, p. 116, our translation), is formative to their professional identities.

This movement is generally maintained in high school, although we can observe slight variation in the percentage of students from public schools (41.4% = 109) compared to those who attended private education institutions (31.9% = 84). At this stage of their schooling, it is interesting to note the type of course sought by former PIBID students: regular high school, reaching, in both institutions, 93%. Vocational education courses, technical courses (electronics, accounting, farming etc.) and teaching (normal course) are more prevalent among undergraduates from PHEI2, which is compatible with the profile of students who attend that institution, usually from social classes with higher urgency to enter the workforce.

The elicited expectation is that public schools' curriculum has the greatest influence on pre-vocational learning acquired by beginner teachers who participated in PIBID, participants of this research. Also concerning professional learning, Marcelo (2009, p. 117, our translation) adds that the “experience with formal knowledge” that takes place in a work context contributes to understanding ways of teaching and learning. He also highlights that this experience with teaching practice in an action context, in this case as learning during initial training, can be the way to overcome the existence of the “myth” that it is the practice that really educates the teacher, to the detriment of discussions of theory, favoring a dichotomy (GARCÍA, 1999, p. 95).

The data examined also allow us to say that former PIBID students in this analysis are young adults who, more prominently, since their admittance into higher education, invest on their training, declaring that, since enrolling in university, they seek opportunities involving the triad teaching, research, and extension. This is a promising path, especially in the face of the arguments that “experiences acquired as students” and “images transported from teachers they saw in action” (FORMOSINHO; MACHADO, 2009, p. 145, our translation) bring to teacher training “a model of professional behavior” to follow or reject. We evidence among former students who answered the survey the acknowledgement, since initial training, of teaching as a professional activity whose knowledge demands diverse and continuous learning.

Relationship with teaching of PIBID former students

In order to achieve more qualified training, we can identify the interest demonstrated by participants in this study in being part of diverse education spaces that favor the

construction of knowledge that helps them confront difficulties that arise in everyday pedagogical practice. The relationship between teaching and research is part of their declarations, as well as their concerns expressed about what we can denominate “training beyond teaching” (FARIAS et al., 2014), although in a rudimentary or incipient manner.

This record constitutes the annotation of participation, during initial training, in several academic activities, transpiring a concern to expand or strengthen their vocational learning. Search for research training prevailed, considering that they relate experiencing scientific initiation activities (85) and actions in research projects guided by teachers from their institution (102). Tutoring (84) and extension experiences (89) also received significant nominations. The answers by PIBID former students signal the acknowledgement of indissociability between theory and practice, which evidences the understanding that teaching activities must be fed back by new knowledge, constantly. As Freire (2007, p. 32, our translation) teaches, “[...] as I teach, I keep seeking, re-seeking”.

The effective exercise of the teaching profession stands out as the prevailing function among those investigated. Out of 263 former PIBID students, a group of 199 (75.6%) declared that they work in the education field, focusing on teaching. Pedagogical coordination and management functions appear very discreetly, as does the exercise of “other functions”, such as administrative agent, technician at the secretariat of education, mediator of reading projects, responsible for facilitating courses, and school tutoring. This is relevant information, because it evidences the incentive produced, since their participation in the program, for entering teaching after graduating their courses, for a representative contingent that works at schools.

In addition, examining the reasons provided by those who declared not to work in the field also tends to reinforce PIBID as an initiative that incites the choice to teach. That happens because justifications given by former students tend to emphasize elements that evidence a search to enter that career in more favorable conditions, since the mention of continuous schooling exceeds other motivations, which point to their wait to enter through public selection, although they indicate lack of opportunities and conditions as causes for the low desirability of a teaching career, which propels them toward other fields.

The theme of the desirability of a teaching career is the object of reflection of many authors, among them Gatti (2009), when warning about the instability and discontinuance in the current historical moment, consequently, about challenges, uncertainty, and the increasing demands for new investments. Seemingly, former PIBID students who declared not to work in the field are confronted with that reality and face it by seeking improvement (those who are studying, enrolled in specialization and/or master’s programs) or a less unstable integration method (those hired through public selection), a movement that, in a way, denotes the configuration of a group with clearer expectations regarding their career and whose choice may have been established more deliberately (VALLE, 2006; CAVALCANTE, 2018).

Above all, beginner teachers in that group who answered the survey work mostly with basic education, followed by early childhood education and the so-called single modality (Youth and Adult Education). Most of them work at only one school, constituting around 85.2% of former students from PHEI2 and 64.3% from PHEI1. At first sight, these

data may suggest dedication and a favorable work context, an impression that dissipates by articulating that with the workload declared, concentrated between 10 and 30 lesson hours. This movement is compatible with the fact that they graduated recently, and their age group suggests that a significant number of them seeks initial integration in teaching that also ensures some free time, which may be related to their concern in investing on studies (greater qualification and preparing for public selections) in order to achieve a more advantageous work situation.

This possibility gains strength if we consider the current work circumstances informed by them, i.e., marked by temporary contracts (78.5% at PHEI2 and 53.1% at PHEI1). The condition of temporary teacher refers to the practice of hiring teachers for a determined period, which is marked by a dearth of rights⁵. In the public network of Ceará, indicators by the Secretariat of Planning of the State of Ceará (SEPLAG, in Portuguese) from 2014 show that “[...] among active teachers, 47.4% are permanent employees and 52.5% are temporary”, which means, in absolute numbers, respectively, 17,694 permanent teachers and 19,633 temporary teachers (APRECE, 2015, p. 3, our translation). The situation at the municipal network of Fortaleza is different from that model. In the capital, for example, data from 2016 available at the Municipal Secretariat of Education (SME, in Portuguese) point to the existence of 12,515 teachers, among whom 9,656 (77.15%) are permanent and 2,859 (22.8%) are substitutes (with precarious contracts).

Contrary to some arguments about evasion for the private network or even from teaching altogether, beginner teachers who participated in that program in Ceará emphasize the public education network – state, municipal, and federal levels – as their predominant institutional field of work. This observation evidences the need for investments that favor their permanence in this career, especially support initiatives in the first years of pedagogical practice, as reflected by García (1999), André (2012), Nono and Mizukami (2006).

The subsidies examined bring positive expectations for the relationship of former PIBID students in Ceará, by revealing a strong adherence to pedagogical practice, with their concentration in the public network. PIBID seems, at least in regard to this group, to have been successful in its intention to stimulate the choice of a teaching career. Integrating these professionals into the public education network, however, tends to situate them in a vulnerable work situation, which certainly has consequences on how they experience their first years of teaching.

Perspectives of beginner teachers who participated in PIBID about starting to teach

Studies surrounding starting to teach assume that one isn't born a teacher, one learns to be a teacher; therefore, they emphasize the work context, the relationships

5- In other words, they have no employment bond with the Public Entity that hires them. Precarious bond because, among other issues, the contract can expire or be terminated with no right to compensation, such as unemployment insurance. The maximum duration of the contract is 12 months, which exposes the teacher to a situation of uncertainty concerning the renovation, or lack thereof, of their contract in the subsequent period. In addition, the temporary teacher doesn't have access to the “Career Action Plan” of their category, with lower salaries than their peers, no matter their education level or time of employment.

experienced there, as paramount to this learning and in the development of the teacher. As stated by Cavaco,

[...] we learn through professional practice, through interaction with others (diverse others: students, colleagues, experts etc.), facing and solving problems, critically appreciating what we do and how we do, readjusting the ways to see and act. (CAVACO, 1991, p. 167, our translation).

In this sense, this study aimed to know the perspective of the 199 beginner teachers in Ceará who participated in PIBID about the beginning of their teaching careers, considering the following themes: a) support and acknowledgement; b) work environment; c) lesson management; d) infrastructure and resources; e) work conditions and salary; and f) contribution of the teaching initiation program for their career.

Support and acknowledgement when starting to teach were considered in relation to the management group, older teachers, students' parents, and the supervision by the school's pedagogical team. In general, data revealed that beginner teachers feel acknowledged and supported by the four segments, although this feeling is less incisive regarding parents and the pedagogical team. The search for support outside the school appears prominently as a strategy to strengthen themselves and face the everyday routine of teaching, which corroborates analyses by Cavaco (1991). The Portuguese author clarifies that "[...] these information networks, to exchange experiences and share knowledge, mainly constitute systems that consolidate the routine", whose main result is more dispelling insecurity and anxiety that beginners face daily "[...] than ensuring a tool that facilitates professional training" (CAVACO, p. 167, our translation).

Regarding the work environment, prevails among beginners the identification of a pleasant work environment in the contexts where they are located, considering complete and partial agreement. A similar feeling can be noticed when they refer to the discussion of practice with other colleagues. The following statement is representative of the feeling of support and welcome reported by teachers who participated in the research:

When I first entered a classroom, I was pretty scared, because now it was just me and my students. How should I proceed? Because before that I was a scholarship holder and wasn't alone with the kids and, because of that, I thought about giving up, but I talked about that unrest with some teachers and they comforted me saying that it was normal, but later I would realize I was just nervous due to the newness. (Beginner Teacher A, our translation).

Although they held that opinion, beginners also revealed that they feel resistance in the school in the face of different pedagogical practices, a perception manifested in one of the statements analyzed:

There's difficulty in acceptance by permanent and veteran teachers toward acknowledging different practices by temporary and new teachers, especially a devaluation of young teachers, with different practice. Turns out the elders 'mock' and don't respect them. (Beginner Teacher B, our translation).

Although there is much discussion about new pedagogical practices, often, the school doesn't accept innovative proposals. (Beginner Teacher C, our translation).

The resistance they mention can be understood as a symptom of the suspicion toward the new and expectations of change it brings to beliefs and practices previously constructed (FARIAS, 2006), therefore, to the school's pedagogical culture.

Despite reporting that, these beginner teachers seem satisfied with the results of their actions in the classroom, both regarding students' learning and positive experiences managing the classroom, as indicated by complete and partial agreements in these aspects. It is reinforced by the following annotation: "In the beginning it wasn't so easy to prepare lessons and show students how interesting chemistry is. Throughout time, they started to understand the importance of that science in our lives" (Beginner Teacher D, our translation). Recognizing oneself as able to handle the job of teaching, mediating students' learning, conducting social, cognitive and affective interactions in the context of the classroom, is one of the challenges envisaged in the first years of teaching, because it means, in the end, asserting oneself as a teacher, overcoming the condition of student (TARDIF, 2014).

The contradictions and challenges that mark the beginning of the teaching career are also intensified by the dominant modalities of job distribution in the school, such as assigning more difficult student groups for beginner teachers, as indicated by several authors. We note, though, that among the beginners who participated in PIBID in Ceará that is a changing practice, since we observe a certain balance between answers signaling agreement (complete and partial) with the assertion that they were assigned the most difficult groups in school and those that signal disagreement (complete and partial). This evidence seems to signal the existence, however emergent, of carefulness toward the beginner, acknowledging their fragility and the delicate moment in their professional trajectory, especially when confronting the challenges of lesson management.

Lesson management and everything surrounding it are expressed as "baptism by fire" for the beginner, since it is in a classroom context that difficulties that intervene with the action of teaching are emphasized, such as students' unruliness, a situation well marked by former PIBID students who participated in the research, who recognize they are challenged when handling such situations. They evaluated thus:

Teaching is an experience that, indisputably, within the classroom, the educator should teach the lesson and especially discipline the student. The professional, sadly, wastes time, is even emotionally wore down by students who only go to class due to obligation, making the teacher's job harder. Although the school supports the teacher, it is laborious and tiresome to demand that students behave in every lesson. Therefore, what I highlight as a beginner professional is the lack of discipline and manners by students. (Beginner Teacher E, our translation).

Students' indiscipline and difficulty to focus are my greatest difficulty in the classroom. (Beginner Teacher F, our translation).

The difficulties in dealing with teenagers, not only in the beginning of the teaching career, but there are always unforeseen circumstances with them. (Beginner Teacher G, our translation).

The difficulty regarding the students' indiscipline, that is demotivating and, sometimes, makes us think about giving up. (Beginner Teacher H, our translation).

The issue of students' indiscipline makes me want to give up on the profession... (Beginner Teacher I, our translation).

Another difficult aspect of teaching is handling crowded classrooms and undisciplined students, because during training I didn't learn how to overcome such situations. (Beginner Teacher J, our translation).

The records analyzed here highlight the need for greater support for beginners, particularly regarding the issue of discipline. It isn't extraneous to remember what Cavaco (1991) warns, when teaching that the

[...] role of teacher, in itself, doesn't ensure acknowledgement of their 'authority' by students in the context of the classroom. With the lack of institutional and peer support and confronted with adverse circumstances in which they need to 'construct urgent answers for the complex situations they face', that can make the beginner 'update' experiences lived as a student and create action schemes they turn into routine and are grounded on traditional models, even forgetting more innovative proposals they theoretically defended. (CAVACO, 1991, p. 164, our translation).

Still regarding that observation, in reports by beginner teachers in this research, lesson management isn't necessarily a problem to be solved, but a situation that requires constant deliberation by the teacher; and that isn't easy, nor can it be learned in books or in isolation.

The school's infrastructure is key to the development of the teachers' work because, as warned by Hargreaves et al. (2002), teachers are also the creation of their workplace. Thus, considering the balance between answers indicating agreement (complete and partial) and disagreement (complete and partial) with the assertion that the school offers adequate physical infrastructure, it is possible to say that the acting contexts of beginners who participated in PIBID tend to intensify difficulties faced in the beginning of the teaching career. On the other hand, they declared that they have access to equipment and technological resources, as well as to pedagogical material in the school, since affirmations of acquiescence (complete and partial agreement) prevail over disagreements (complete and partial).

Regarding work conditions, these teachers appear partially satisfied with their workload and emphasize that they consider the number of students per class inadequate, identifying classes in their reports as "overcrowded" and restrictive to lesson management. They also highlight that they aren't satisfied with their salaries, a prevailing position

among participants of this study in Ceará. The following statement is illustrative of these teachers' opinion:

The salary isn't very attractive. Unfortunately, the teacher in the beginning of the career has to be swamped with too many classes and work three shifts just to try having a decent life! While the starting salary isn't worthy of a higher education salary, unfortunately, evasion from teaching training courses tends to increase. (Beginner Teacher L, our translation).

As a whole, the analysis of those three aspects – workload, number of students per class, and salary – evidences the displeasure of beginner teachers with the work conditions they face in their school context, although there is variation in the relation between answers of agreement (complete and partial) and disagreement (complete and partial) specifically linked to them. Overall, the warning by Hargreaves et al. (2002) demands attention by the school and educational managers, aiming at the development of actions and policies that strengthen both the integration and permanence of new teachers at the school. In addition, it is important to remember the recommendation by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), emphasized by André (2012, our translation), when mentioning results from the report “Teachers matter: attracting, developing and retaining effective teachers”. According to the author, “[...] policies for teachers must ensure that educators work in an environment that favors their success”, adding that “[...] concern with competent teachers dropping out has led some countries to adopt policies that not only attract, develop and recruit good professionals, but also create conditions for teachers to want to stay in the profession” (p. 115).

In Brazil, concern with the beginner teacher is still incipient, whether as a research theme or as the focus of institutionalized actions in the context of public entities, as shown in studies by Davis *et al.* (2011) and André (2012). Lately, PIBID has been an initiative attentive with that segment, because it aims to stimulate the choice for a teaching career since initial training, favoring students in teacher training courses, future basic education teachers.

As previously mentioned, beginner teachers analyzed in this study are former members of PIBID in Ceará, who have quite a positive appreciation for the program's contribution to their initial teaching integration. They describe it as “a game changer in my life and my career” (Beginner Teacher M, our translation), an experience that allowed them to “relate to the profession” (Beginner Teacher N, our translation) and ensured “more confidence when beginning to teach” (Beginner Teacher O, our translation). They acknowledge that participating in PIBID contributed to their professional development, emphasizing that “many of the practices observed I inserted into my lessons and use until now” (Beginner Teacher P, our translation). These records reinforce the importance of teaching initiation actions still in the context of initial training, especially for the beginners to recognize themselves as teachers and become familiar with gestures, thoughts and actions that are characteristic of the job (GARCÍA, 1999; CAVACO, 1991; NONO; MIZUKAMI, 2006).

Mastering knowledge, the relationship between that knowledge and everyday practice, the need to deliberate unforeseen situations and create or improvise stimulating activities, as well as asserting their authority with colleagues and students, are recurring concerns among those beginners when they express the program's contributions:

In the beginning, teaching was difficult, because I was so young, I seemed more like a new student in the class than their teacher; I had to overcome the barrier of prejudice regarding age and show that I had the knowledge and education strategies needed for good learning. It felt like I was going to war in the classroom, 40 students against me. PIBID helped a lot in that aspect, it gave me the necessary assurance to enter the classroom confidently and not 'armed' for battle. I feel, now, accomplished in my career, I love my job and, especially, my students. My lessons adapt to their needs, and not to my self-assurance in possessing knowledge. (Beginner Teacher Q, our translation, emphasis added).

PIBID was extremely important for my academic education and teaching practice, because through that program I was able to know the reality of schools, participating in the routine of the education institution. Teaching isn't simply transmitting knowledge, but also forming and actively participating in the lives and learning of young students. The program allowed me to diversify and analyze other ways to transmit the themes proposed by biology in a different, attractive and innovative manner. In addition, it enabled my participation in national conferences to exhibit studies developed in schools that participate in the program. PIBID is undoubtedly innovative, a pioneer in teacher training and demonstrably effective in preparing future teachers to pursue a career as qualified educators in Brazilian education. (Beginner Teacher R, our translation, emphasis added).

The excerpts emphasized highlight contributions identified by beginner teachers who participated in PIBID in Ceará that we have been describing, emphasizing since knowledge of schools' reality, overcoming barriers arising due to young age, learning to handle the challenges of the classroom and acknowledging that teaching requires specific knowledge. At the same time, their reports, particularly the excerpts transcribed here, allow us to understand why Vaillant and García (2012, p. 124, our translation) defined teaching integration as "[...] an intensive period of tensions and learning, usually in unknown contexts and during which this category of teachers must acquire professional knowledge, in addition to maintaining certain personal balance".

Knowing the work context, understanding how it functions, understanding the professional and institutional culture that prevails there – it all takes time and is emotionally taxing, but key to the constitution of qualified teachers, as Beginner Teacher R deliberates. In fact, direct, systematic and continued contact with the school stands out in reports about PIBID as a distinctive element.

Recognizing that teaching can seem easy, as expressed by Lüdke and Boing (2012), but is far from an activity that can be improvised, thus requiring specialized knowledge, is also clear among these teachers who are beginning their professional life, as illustrated by the two previous statements.

Being young, an expression usually associated to immaturity and lack of ability to decide, makes the beginner teachers' condition even more delicate, as reported by Beginner Teacher Q. Although alluding to the context of the classroom, to the challenge of asserting their authority as teacher with the students, this resistance is also noticeable among colleagues at the school, as previously mentioned. In these situations, from what can be glimpsed in the comments of those surveyed in this study, mastering professional knowledge, especially subject and didactic-pedagogical knowledge, serves as an anchor that enables them to sustain the teaching position before colleagues and students.

Finally, the mark of survival, discovery and challenge confrontation in the classroom and the school colors the paths experienced in the first years of teaching for former PIBID students, who emphatically distinguish that participating in that program was decisive to be a teacher, because, by strengthening their professional knowledge, they consider it qualified them to confront the challenges of teaching; in summary, it was an experience that changed the course of their lives and their integration into a teaching career.

Perspectives of beginner teachers about pursuing a teaching career or not

Among beginner teachers, about whom we talk in this article, 199 answered the survey. Out of these, a contingent of 163 (81.90%) stated that they intend to continue their teaching careers. Explanations, in this case, refer to identification with and a taste for teaching, as well as the social relevance of that activity.

The taste for and identification with teaching are thus expressed by them:

Yes. It is a work field that charms me. My interest, although challenges continue. (Beginner Teacher S, our translation).

Yes, because teaching satisfies me. (Beginner Teacher T, our translation).

It is the profession I chose and despite little acknowledgement, I believe that better days will come, when this professional will be respected by society! (Beginner Teacher U, our translation).

Yes. I identified with the profession, I take pleasure in my work. (Beginner Teacher V, our translation).

Yes, because I love it and identify as a teacher. (Beginner Teacher X, our translation).

Cavaco (1991, p. 166, our translation) mentions taste for the profession, highlighting it as an important element that, in the beginning, facilitates “[...] appropriation critically reflected of diverse professional competencies”. Having affinity, liking what one does, is a component that propels and motivates the search to learn, especially in a complex work such as teaching.

Another argument presented to justify the interest in pursuing a teaching career refers to acknowledging its social relevance, expressed in the understanding that, “despite immense difficulties, it is still one of the most effective ways to change our environment”

(Beginner Teacher Z, our translation), as well as in the belief that “acquisition, analysis and production of knowledge favor a richer worldview that, in turn, enables the formation of people more ethical and capable of creating change in our reality” (Beginner Teacher K, our translation). The desire to contribute to changes in society and “make a difference” in students’ lives, which evidences a significant association with the ethical nature of the teaching profession (“being a teacher is much more than a job to me; it feels like a social duty and I’m glad to fulfill that duty” – Beginner Teacher W, our translation), sets the tone of the justifications provided by participants. It is important to remember, considering the ideas by Contreras (2002), that “commitment to the community” is a decisive component in how these teachers outline their way of living and being in the profession.

Among beginners who showed doubt regarding their permanence in the teaching profession, we notice, above all, the weight of a “not very attractive” career, with low pay, worsened by the increased lack of discipline in the school context. Similar arguments are presented by those who stated they don’t intend to continue in the teaching career, claiming that the job is “very stressful and brings very little acknowledgement, both financially and professionally” (Beginner Teacher Y, our translation).

Final considerations

We presumed, at the beginning, that the phenomenon of “learning to teach” has stages, and the one encompassing the first years of teaching is the basis for the “[...] configuration of future professional actions and the very permanence in the teaching career”, when “personal factors” and “professional, structural and organizational aspects” are confronted (PAPI; MARTINS, 2010, p. 43-44, our translation). Participation in PIBID enabled former students participating in this research, during initial training and career integration, a more constructive confrontation regarding the dilemmas of the profession, which provided elements, predominantly, to recognize themselves as capable of facing challenges, reinventions and innovations.

They start the career still very young and, given the sparse opportunities for public selections, most have precarious employment bonds. Possibly, what cements their search for continued work in public schools is related to debunking the latter as a limited locus of possibilities, a perspective constructed since their integration into public schools during PIBID actions under another prism: as a future professional educator.

Their practices are acknowledged by peers, family members, and students’ relatives, they feel satisfied with their actions, know their tasks and confrontations, handle all those elements well. This less turbulent start in teaching, despite mentions to a reality shock, finds support in the pedagogical model of PIBID, which brings teacher practice into formative processes. Expressed in another way, a “[...] teacher training constructed in the profession” (NÓVOA, 2009, p. 25, our translation), providing future teachers with knowledge about teaching in their contexts.

Among beginner teachers who participated in PIBID prevails an intense identification with teaching, except for a small group who discovers, with that experience and the experience of their first years in teaching, that they prefer to invest their efforts in a

profession that will guarantee better financial payback. We can infer that the lack of desire to pursue a teaching career doesn't imply lack of identification with the profession, since the stronger indication, present in their statements, is that the issue of a life with better financial conditions is what propels them to seek a career with better pay.

Thus, and considering deliberations by Darling-Hammond (2014) mentioned in the beginning of this paper, it wouldn't be inappropriate to say that beginner teachers who participated in PIBID, particularly in Ceará, even in the face of adversities inherent to the complexity of teaching, declare themselves to be prepared to confront the dilemmas of the first years in teaching. From that point of view, they reinforce the premise that more training and, especially, training articulated with the future work context, favors professional learning. They evidence that they find, in the support by more experienced colleagues, in and out of the school, and in everyday classroom challenges, opportunities to learn, which allow them to qualify their practice in the first years of teaching. This period has also been experienced with more confidence and conviction in the decision to be a teacher and their belief of being better prepared to fulfill that occupation. In summary, they feel satisfied with their choice.

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