

**IDENTITY CHARACTERISTICS OF TEACHERS IN THE FINAL YEARS OF
ELEMENTARY EDUCATION RELATED TO THE SCHOOL CONTEXT**

**CARACTERÍSTICAS IDENTITÁRIAS DE PROFESSORES DOS ANOS FINAIS
DO ENSINO FUNDAMENTAL RELACIONADAS AO CONTEXTO ESCOLAR**

**CARACTERÍSTICAS DE IDENTIDAD DE LOS DOCENTES EN LOS ÚLTIMOS
AÑOS DE LA ESCUELA PRIMARIA RELACIONADAS CON EL CONTEXTO
ESCOLAR**

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ABSTRACT

This research is part of the Graduate Program in Public Policy and Educational Management at the Federal University of Santa Maria and is an excerpt from the master's dissertation: "Implications of the School Context on the Professional Identity of Final Grade Elementary School Teachers at a School in Santa Maria, RS." The study of teacher identity is not new; however, in recent decades, with the transformations we see in our society, it has presented new paradigms. This article aims to understand how teachers define/characterize the identity aspects of their professional work collective and what identity characteristics they attribute to their work at the school studied. This is a qualitative study, in which narrative interviews were conducted, addressing teachers' perceptions of their professional identity and how the school environment relates to the development of their teaching work. The data sources for the research are the teachers of the Arco-íris school, five elementary school teachers. The results of this research highlight the complexity of teaching in socially vulnerable contexts, where teachers act beyond simply transmitting content and are agents of acceptance and transformation. Teaching identity is marked by empathy, adaptability, and ethical commitment. Completing this research was more than an academic exercise; it was an act of listening, recognition, and commitment to teaching in its most human form.

Keywords: Teaching Identity. Basic Education. Teaching Work. Narrative Interviews.

RESUMO

Esta pesquisa está vinculada ao Programa de Pós-Graduação em Políticas Públicas e Gestão Educacional, da Universidade Federal de Santa Maria e é um recorte da dissertação de mestrado: "Implicações do contexto escolar na identidade profissional de professores dos anos finais do Ensino fundamental em uma escola de Santa Maria - RS". O estudo sobre a identidade docente não é algo novo, porém, nas últimas décadas, com as transformações que percebemos na nossa sociedade, vem apresentando novos paradigmas. Este artigo objetiva compreender como os professores definem/caracterizam os aspectos identitários de seu coletivo de trabalho profissional e quais são as características identitárias que os

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professores atribuem à atuação na escola pesquisada. Trata-se de um estudo qualitativo, no qual foram realizadas entrevistas narrativas, que abordaram as percepções dos docentes sobre sua identidade profissional e como a realidade escolar se relaciona com o desenvolvimento do seu trabalho docente. As fontes de dados para a pesquisa são os professores da escola Arco-íris, cinco docentes da Educação Básica. Como resultados, a pesquisa evidencia a complexidade da docência em contextos de vulnerabilidade social, onde os professores atuam além da transmissão de conteúdo, sendo agentes de acolhimento e transformação. A identidade docente é marcada por empatia, adaptabilidade e compromisso ético. Concluir esta pesquisa foi mais do que um exercício acadêmico; foi um ato de escuta, de reconhecimento e de compromisso com a docência em sua forma mais humana.

Palavras-chave: Identidade Docente. Educação Básica. Trabalho Docente. Entrevistas Narrativas.

RESUMEN

Esta investigación se vincula al Programa de Posgrado en Políticas Públicas y Gestión Educativa de la Universidad Federal de Santa María y es un extracto de la tesis de maestría: «Implicaciones del contexto escolar en la identidad profesional de docentes de los últimos años de la escuela primaria en una escuela de Santa María, RS». El estudio de la identidad docente no es nuevo; sin embargo, en las últimas décadas, con las transformaciones que hemos presenciado en nuestra sociedad, ha presentado nuevos paradigmas. Este artículo busca comprender cómo los docentes definen y caracterizan los aspectos identitarios de su trabajo colectivo profesional y qué características identitarias atribuyen a su desempeño en la escuela estudiada. Se trata de un estudio cualitativo, en el que se realizaron entrevistas narrativas que abordaron las percepciones de los docentes sobre su identidad profesional y cómo la realidad escolar se relaciona con el desarrollo de su labor docente. Las fuentes de datos para la investigación son los docentes de la escuela Arco-íris, cinco docentes de Educación Básica. Como resultado, la investigación destaca la complejidad de la enseñanza en contextos de vulnerabilidad social, donde los docentes van más allá de la transmisión de contenidos, convirtiéndose en agentes de apoyo y transformación. La identidad docente se caracteriza por la empatía, la adaptabilidad y el compromiso ético. Realizar esta investigación fue más que un ejercicio académico; fue un acto de escucha, reconocimiento y compromiso con la enseñanza en su forma más humana.

Palabras clave: Identidad Docente. Educación Básica. Trabajo Docente. Entrevistas Narrativas.

1 INTRODUCTION

Reflection on the role of education, especially in the context of basic education schools, is fundamental to understand how educational institutions can or cannot contribute to the reduction of social inequalities. In a society marked by class divisions, the public school, intended for the economically disadvantaged, faces complex challenges in relation to the definition of its role.

Throughout her trajectory as a teacher, we realized how much the teaching identity is something inherent to the profession and how much it can change over time and in relation to its context. In this sense, the study I develop, addressing the relationship between the professional identity of teachers and the educational context of their work, is justified by the fact that it is a theme that is rarely addressed in academic research when it is related, which shows its academic, social and scientific relevance.

The research intends to correlate the identity variables of teachers in the triad: teachers, school context and teaching work to know to what extent one of the elements influences the others and vice versa. With regard to identity, it is known that it is constituted over time in the face of interactions and socialization of habits, traditions, skills and knowledge, which are linked both to the professional universe and to the personal trajectory of each individual.

Thus, it is important to problematize and research the changes that permeate our professional identity when encountering a school reality with social vulnerability, in which families are low-income and with little perspective in life. Students often have no help to carry out their schoolwork because they sometimes have a higher level of education than their parents and perform household chores, as well as care for siblings.

Due to these factors, students in social vulnerability end up seeking their main meal of the day at school, dedicating to study/school a secondary aspect in their daily routine, as they have more important and imminent concerns in their lives to deal with. This is a harsh reality, we need to analyze how this has repercussions on teaching and what is the impact on teacher preparation in the exercise of their work.

The educational relevance of this study is mainly due to the few studies that contemplate the relationships between the themes: professional identity, educational context and teaching work. In the literature review "Teacher identity: a systematic literature review study", carried out by the authors, it reveals that, in the proposed cut, no research was found

relating the three themes that guide the current research. Also, no studies were found with teachers in the final years of Elementary School.

That said, the present work is also relevant for studying the context of a municipal school located in the city of Santa Maria - RS. The respective school is one of the largest in the municipality, both in number of students and in physical space and infrastructure. The study can help in further research, such as: to confront data with other school reality(s) and observe analogous or contrasting results.

The research is qualitative and proposes, in addition to analyzing defining aspects of the professional identity of teachers, to point out some concepts and positions in relation to teaching, in the search to relate the teaching work with the school reality and the profile of teachers. Data collection was based on narrative interviews, which addressed teachers' perceptions about their professional identity and how the school reality relates to the development of their teaching work. After the interviews, all the material was used for analysis and discussion on the topic.

From the research it is expected that the investigation on the professional identity of teachers, especially in contexts of social vulnerability, allows a deeper understanding of the challenges and demands faced by Basic Education teachers. This study, by exploring teachers' perceptions about their role and the impact of the school context on the construction of their identity, offers a significant contribution to the understanding of the relationships between the work environment and professional development. In this way, it is expected that this research will contribute to reflections and actions aimed at strengthening the teaching work in scenarios of diversity and complexity, promoting a fairer and more quality public education.

2 PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY OF TEACHERS

To start our discussion about identity, we looked for the most classic author on the subject, Claude Dubar. Thus, Dubar (2006) writes that identity should be understood as a social, historical and relational process, and not as a fixed or immutable essence of the subject. Far from being something given or permanent, it results from multiple forms of identification that the individual establishes with himself and with others throughout life. This construction occurs through a continuous movement of differentiation, which defines the uniqueness of each person; and generalization, which allows the feeling of belonging to certain groups.

In the educational field, this means that each teacher builds his or her professional identity while recognizing himself or herself as part of a collective of teachers, sharing common values, practices, and challenges. However, this balance between the personal and the collective is often strained by institutional, political and cultural changes that alter the forms of recognition and appreciation of the teaching work.

Dubar (2006) emphasizes that "there is no identity without alterity", because the recognition of the other is a condition for the formation of the "I". Identity, therefore, is a continuous movement between singularity and belonging. The author distinguishes four main forms of identity:

- Biographical for others: linked to cultural heritage and to the community "we";
- Relational for others: associated with institutions and social roles;
- Relational for oneself: built on commitment to personal projects and values;
- Biographical for oneself: or narrative identity, which articulates the life story and the coherence of the subject.

These dimensions coexist and intertwine, being influenced by structures of domination and recognition that, when transformed, generate the so-called "crisis of identities". For Dubar (2006), this crisis is not just disorder, but a moment of reflection and reinvention, in which the subject redefines his social ties and the sense of himself. The crisis of identities emerges when the collective and stable references that sustained social recognition, such as profession, family or religion, are weakened.

The transformations of work, growing individualism and the plurality of social roles make identity an uncertain, multiple and ruptured process. Thus, to understand the crisis of identities is to understand the transformations of modernity itself, the continuous movement of destruction and reconstruction of ways of being in the world (Dubar, 2006).

Understanding the professional identity of teachers requires recognizing that "being a teacher" is continuously (re)constructed by experience, relationships and social transformations. This identity is affected by factors such as institutional recognition, working conditions, and social expectations. The school, ideally, should promote equality, citizenship and emancipation, but it faces structural and symbolic limitations that have repercussions on the appreciation and self-image of the teacher.

The teacher - in many cases, considered responsible for all school failure and failure of student learning, an aspect that must be problematized, considering the multiple factors

that affect the low quality of teaching. Thus, we sought to look at these professionals, to know about their identity, how they perceive themselves, how they build and project themselves every day in their work environment and what are the influences that interfere in the development of their profession.

Santos (2022) observes that social changes directly influence the constitution of teacher identity, imposing new demands that go beyond the technical domain of teaching. The teacher needs to deal with challenges such as cultural diversity, inequality, technologies and school conflicts. To face this scenario, it is necessary to continuously improve, develop social and emotional skills, and permanently reflect on one's own practice and identity. However, initial teacher training often remains outdated, generating a mismatch between preparation and the real demands of the profession, which can lead to demotivation and burnout.

The choice of the teaching profession is not something spontaneous, one does not become a teacher from one moment to the next, it is not something that one can feel like a teacher without previous preparation. Added to this is the devaluation of the profession combined with a weakened image of what it means to be a teacher. In this way, we are not born teachers nor are we destined/vocation for this profession, but rather, we become teachers.

In this process, being a teacher is not something innate or vocational, but the result of a long path of socialization and training. Bezerra (2020, p.435) highlights that "teacher identity is built in a dynamic and plural way, with no beginning and no end". Dubar (2005) adds that entry and professional experience configure a secondary socialization, in which identity is shaped by experience and daily interaction.

To complement this, De Sousa and Magalhães (2021, p.247) write:

We can then say that every time a teacher is formed, a professional, a citizen, a being in himself, is being formed. But, at the same time, we are forming a historical, communitarian, collective subject, a being for itself. When a teacher is trained, a certain extent constitutes a little of the social fabric to which this educator belongs. Thus, this teacher is then perceived as part of a collectivity, as a member of a community. There is a certain empathy with the teaching figure, as if he were always someone close, someone from the family. Perhaps this results in the treatment of "aunt" or "uncle" to teachers of early childhood education and even of the initial grades of elementary school. It happens that when he graduates, this teacher will work in institutions that are at the service of the nation-state, at the service of the interests of large economic groups, at the service of large international industry, always waiting for technically qualified labor (and at low cost), in short, at the service of the market.

For Bezerra (2020), teacher professionalization requires a reflective posture on pedagogical practice and on the social role of education, encompassing teaching, research, and extension. Professional identity, according to the same authors, is shaped both by the teacher's self-image and by the social recognition of the profession, being transformed throughout the career by institutional, political and cultural influences.

For De Sousa and Magalhães (2021), professional identity is the way professionals perceive themselves and in relation to individuals in other professions. When it comes to teaching, this identity is formed in part by the self-image that the teacher has as someone who performs specific duties in a given context, space and time. It also takes into account the way in which these functions are perceived by the community to which he belongs. In this way, the construction of professional identity is transformed throughout the teaching career and can be modified by the influence of the school, the educational system, political and cultural contexts, moral values, among other factors.

Nevertheless, it is necessary for teachers to develop the ability to reflect on their career and their trajectory, always adapting and interspersing the professional and the personal, in order to progress in their teaching work. For Bezerra (2020), school teaching currently needs to humanize interpersonal relationships and educate for empathy and solidarity, with awareness of citizenship; so that education integrates knowledge, school and community. Thus, Bezerra (2020, p.437) adds that: "Even if the teacher identity is a collective construction or even if the training process is established from the same curricular composition, each subject is constituted as a teacher in his or her own way".

According to Bezerra (2020), the constitution of the teacher's professional identity encompasses the sociocultural environment of the group to which he belongs and develops in three dimensions: personal, professional, and institutional development. It is in the interrelation of these three dimensions that a teacher is formed. The first dimension is about the events of the teacher's life; the second deals with the elements that involve the academic trajectory and the means to become the teacher.

The third, on the other hand, is related to the investments of the institutions and the various places in which they performed their work. And this entire process of training and professionalization is influenced by several transformations, because with each new learning there may be a discovery and a change that will affect the future and will be, from then on, performed throughout the teaching trajectory (Bezerra, 2020).

Leal (2014) adds that teaching is constantly changing, influenced by working conditions and social transformations. For her, teaching knowledge, values, feelings and attitudes form the constitutive elements of professional identity, developing in a constant search for the "authentic self" in the midst of crises and challenges. Teaching must be constantly reviewed and renewed. Even doing what is possible, bordering on the impossible, sometimes it turns out not to be enough.

According to Leal (2014), the constituent elements of the teacher's professional identity are: the socio-historical context, initial training, individual or collective professional career and the teaching knowledge developed since initial training. Also, the experiences as a student collaborate to be a teacher, through the established analogies and the positive or negative events of the school trajectory.

According to Campos, Gaspar and Morais (2020), teachers cannot stop being who they are when they enter the work environment, with this, beliefs, joys, disappointments, anguish and personal and professional difficulties accompany them in the exercise of their profession. For the same authors (2020, p.98) "the way the teacher teaches is directly related to the representation he/she has of him/herself when teaching".

Basic education in Brazil, although it has advanced with legal frameworks and social movements, has become more democratic by expanding the participation of the population. Even so, it cannot always guarantee equitable conditions that respect identities, differences, and power relations among its various audiences.

The concept of "education for all" does not directly ensure accessibility, sufficient learning opportunities for all involved, or recognition of different diversities. The characteristics of the school environment include frequent classifications and categorizations that can reinforce contrasting thoughts, such as the differentiation between good and bad students, or between those considered successful or unsuccessful in the view of educators (Weber and Pieczkowski, 2023).

The analysis of the teacher's professional identity reveals a complex and multifaceted panorama, in which the teacher is a central protagonist in an educational system that faces significant challenges. The teacher identity is shaped not only by the teacher himself, but also by the recognition and expectations of society and educational institutions.

The teaching profession, therefore, is not only a role to be played, but a continuous process of training and transformation. Teachers must constantly reflect on their practices

and seek to develop skills that go beyond academic content, encompassing social, emotional and intercultural competences.

Therefore, understanding teacher identity implies recognizing its complex, plural and constantly moving nature. It is continuously (re)constructed in the tensions between the individual and the collective, recognition and devaluation, tradition and innovation. As Dubar (2006) states, in contemporary societies marked by fluidity and fragmentation, the teacher needs to constantly negotiate his position, balancing the institutional requirements and his personal teaching project. Developing a solid professional identity requires, therefore, appreciation, continuous training and decent working conditions, so that the educator can reinvent himself, critically reflect on his practice and maintain the ethical and social sense of "being a teacher" today.

3 METHODOLOGY

The study proposes a reflection on the school context as a constitutive element of the professional identity of teachers in a municipal school in Santa Maria (RS). The research, of a qualitative nature, used narrative interviews with five teachers of the final years of elementary school, seeking to understand how teachers define and perceive their professional identity and how the school reality influences the development of their work.

The choice of the school, which is also the place where the researcher works, follows the proposal of the Professional Master's Degree in Public Policy and Educational Management at UFSM, which values the investigation of the work environment itself as a means of understanding its internal dynamics and proposing practical improvements. This approach enables an in-depth analysis of institutional, cultural and pedagogical relations and favors the direct application of the results in improving the school climate, teacher engagement and local educational policies.

The research aims to understand how teachers define/characterize the identity aspects of their professional work collective and what are the identity characteristics that teachers attribute to their performance in the researched school.

The narrative interviews followed Schütze's (2013) methodology, allowing participants to narrate their trajectories freely, without induction, to reveal experiences, interpretations and meanings attributed to being a teacher. Initially, the basic data of the interview were recorded, such as: name of the interviewer, place, date, time, duration and the instrument used for recording. Then, we applied a brief form containing information about the interviewee,

including: initial training, graduate degree, time working in school, teaching time and workload.

The elaboration of the script was organized in thematic blocks, with the objective of better structuring the categories of analysis of the narratives. Each block had a general title and guiding points that indicated the topics on which the interviewee could discuss. We chose to let the interviewee talk about the topics with minimal intervention, in order to avoid inductions and respect the principles of the narrative interview.

The interviews were conducted between May 31 and June 30, 2025, all conducted on the school premises, in reserved spaces, such as the meeting room and the video room. At the time of each interview, the Informed Consent Form (ICF) was presented, which authorized data collection and voice recording, intended for subsequent transcription of the interviews. The duration of the interviews was from 37 (thirty-seven) minutes to 1h06 (one hour and six minutes). Afterwards, we proceeded to the transcription of the interviews,

In general, it was remarkable to notice how each one expressed their reflections on pedagogical practice, highlighting the methods they use in the classroom and the strategies they develop to deal with the specificities of their students. The interviews also allowed them to understand what challenges them on a daily basis: from the structural limitations of the school to the complexities inherent to human relations, such as the reception of students in situations of social vulnerability. In addition, the reports about their sources of motivation were interesting, whether they were related to affective bonds with peers and students, in the pleasure of teaching or in the satisfaction of perceiving advances, even if gradual, in the learning process.

The interviews also brought to light the way in which the teaching work is intertwined with personal life. Many teachers reported strategies to balance the demands of the profession with family and personal life, while others reflected on the emotional and physical impacts that teaching practice can generate.

Finally, it was particularly interesting to learn about the perspectives that each one builds for the future, revealing dreams, plans for continuity or career changes, as well as expectations about the role of teaching and education in the current context and in the next generations.

Listening to these narratives reinforced the complexity and richness of the teacher's identity, showing that, although they share the same institutional space, each teacher has a unique trajectory, shaped by very particular experiences, values, challenges and choices.

4 ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF THE INTERVIEWS

Textual analysis is a technique that transcends the mere reading and description of the content in the texts. It allows a dive between the lines, seeking to understand in depth what is being said, who says it and with what motivations. In this process, the gaze on the text broadens to capture not only the explicit words, but also the implicit meanings and hidden intentions, with the purpose of apprehending, in detail, the experiences, emotions and perspectives that are manifested in the narrative.

To analyze the narrative interviews, the perspectives of Weller (2009) and Weller and Pfaff (2010) were used, inspired by Fritz Schütze. For the authors, the narrative interview seeks to reconstruct the subject's life trajectory, letting him speak with minimal interference from the interviewer. The focus is on the way the story is told, not just the content. The subject is seen as a social actor who interprets his own story, not only as an informant.

The narrative interview, as developed by Fritz Schütze, is a qualitative technique that aims to understand individual experiences from the narratives that the subjects themselves build about their lives. This approach values the spontaneity and depth of the stories told, allowing respondents to express their perceptions and meanings attributed to their experiences.

In order to collect data not to reveal information about the school and the interviewees, the school was referred to as Arco-íris. For the teachers, each one was asked to choose a color as an identification for the research. The justification for the choice of the school reference (Rainbow) and the identification of teachers (colors) is due to the school's classes being named by colors.

Next, we have Table 1, which presents the characteristics of the teachers interviewed in relation to training and professional performance.

Table 1

Characteristics of the teachers interviewed

Subject	Age	Initial training	Postgraduate studies	Time at School	Experience in Teaching	Workload
Green	35 years	Degree in Mathematics	It does not.	8 years	13 years	40h
Red	40 years	Degree in Letters – Portuguese	Master's Degree in Languages in the area of Applied Linguistics	4 years	20 years	40h

Blue	57 years	Bachelor of Fine Arts	Specialization in Environmental Education	8 years	13 years	40h
Rose	50 years	Bachelor of Arts – English	Specialization in English Language Teaching Methodologies	2 years	30 years	50h
Yellow	28 years old	Degree in Letters – Portuguese	PhD in Education	4 years	6 years	30h

Source: Prepared by the authors (2025).

As shown in the table above, the age of the participating teachers varies between 28 and 57 years. In relation to initial training, there is a diversity of areas: one teacher has a degree in Mathematics, another in Arts, and three in Letters — two with a qualification in Portuguese and one in English. As for continuing education, it is noted that Professor Verde does not have specialization; professors Azul and Rosa have lato sensu postgraduate degrees; Professor Vermelho is a master; and Professor Amarelo has a PhD degree.

Regarding the time they have been working at the Rainbow School, the Green and Blue teachers have been at the institution for eight years; the Red teacher and the yellow teacher, for four years; and teacher Rosa is in her second year at the school. Regarding total teaching experience, two professors (Green and Blue) have a 13-year career; Professor Vermelho has 20 years of experience; teacher Rosa is the most experienced, with 30 years of experience; and Professor Amarelo is the most recent in the profession, with six years of experience in the field of education.

As for the weekly workload, the data reveal a certain homogeneity: three teachers (Green, Red and Blue) work 40 hours a week; teacher Amarelo works 30 hours; and teacher Rosa, 50 hours.

After this brief presentation of the participants' profiles, we organized the analysis of the interviews into thematic blocks, according to the previously prepared script. The structure followed the division by topics, bringing together the speeches of each teacher in an articulated way, with the objective of favoring the understanding and deepening of the analyses.

Regarding the analysis stages of the narrative interviews inspired by Schutze, we have a stage called contrastive comparison in which we compare the analyzed case with others. In this way we can have a minimum contrast - similar cases, to deepen understanding; or maximum contrast - very different cases, to explore alternatives and expand the understanding of biographical processes.

Below is the contrastive comparison on the characteristics and organization of the teaching work.

Table 2

Characteristics and organization of the teaching work

Characteristics and organization of the teaching work	TEACHERS				
	Green	Red	Blue	Rose	Yellow
Characteristics of a good teacher	It values specific training as a basis for mastering the content. The teaching experience is cumulative and formative in itself.	Mastery of the content is essential, as students perceive whether the teacher has knowledge or not. Creating a learning environment that balances seriousness with relaxation and adaptability are important qualities.	Have a balance between rigidity and flexibility, knowing how to demand from students without losing empathy and respect. He emphasizes that the teacher is the mainstay of the classroom and must command firmly, but also be attentive to the signs of the students, who may be asking for help.	Knowing your discipline and continuing to study are essential (you are currently doing a specialization). It highlights empathy and affection with students.	Being in constant learning and adaptation are essential in the profession. She is motivated to continue in the profession and transform the social reality of students.
Planning and organization of teaching work	The teacher highlights the importance of wanting to be in teaching and providing meaningful learning for students. It recognizes the need to adapt to the profile of each class.	Planning should be tailored to the specific needs of students. Inclusion requires constant innovation and learning on the part of the teacher.	He always adapted the contents of the books to the realities of the schools, avoiding rigid methods. It uses its own materials and always seeks to innovate. Each year, she reviews and modifies her polygraph, keeping what works and discarding what didn't work.	Use the English workbook and make necessary adaptations. In Educational Informatics, he creates classes and games, as there is no specific material for the subject.	Use the workbook and adapt the material. They have few additional features such as copies and video room. Create classes according to need.
Diversity/complexity of students	Good ability to adapt to the needs of classes and students.	Teacher adaptability is essential. Challenges in dealing with	Adjusts teaching strategies according to the needs of students	It recognizes the need to adapt to the	Difficulty in contemplating all the diversities of students, not

		students' social, racial, and economic issues, which influence learning.	and the results obtained.	students' context.	only those of the SEA, in relation to class time.
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Source: Prepared by the authors (2025).

In relation to block 1 on the characteristics and organization of the teaching work, the contrastive comparison allows for a deeper understanding of the teaching trajectories by putting different experiences in dialogue. The minimal contrast between the interviews points to important convergences in professional performance.

In all narratives, there is a need to adapt content, handouts, materials or methodologies according to the students' profile, learning difficulties and available resources. This reveals a striking characteristic of teaching in challenging contexts: adaptation.

Teacher planning is based on expectations about students, which often do not correspond to reality, requiring constant adaptations. The teacher also needs to consider the demands of the institution, the school community, the available resources, the curriculum and the particularities of each class; aspects present in the studies of Campos, Gaspar and Morais (2020).

Another relevant point is continuing education and professional development. Although with different training paths, teachers recognize the importance of being in constant learning, whether through courses, individual studies or through their own experience in the classroom. This valorization appears as a common trait of the teacher's identity.

Thus, in everyday life, the formation of teaching knowledge is not limited to the pedagogical practice itself. It is visible when teachers review their classes, adapt strategies and introduce new things based on new knowledge acquired in readings, experiences and exchanges with colleagues.

We also observed the appreciation of the affective and ethical bond with the students. Affectivity, empathy and the desire to make a difference in the students' lives are aspects strongly present in the statements, reinforcing a relational dimension of the pedagogical work. Both aspects related to continuing education and professional development and a more humanized and affective approach converge with the studies of Bezerra (2020).

With regard to maximum contrast, the narratives point to an important distinction. Green, Red and Pink teachers elect as an essential characteristic of being a good teacher to have mastery of their curricular component, while Blue and Yellow put adaptability first.

Although flexibility appears in everyone, it is also essential to know the content to be able to develop it with students.

The contrastive comparison of the characteristics and organization of the teaching work allows us to understand that adaptability, professional development and the bond with students permeate these professionals. On the other hand, it reveals differences in the priorities perceived in the teaching practice, divided into the domain of the disciplinary content as the basis of the work and the ability to adapt to school realities.

In summary, the comparative analysis allows us to understand that the teaching practice is sustained by a dynamic balance between theoretical knowledge, pedagogical flexibility and human involvement, composing a teaching model that resists adversity with creativity, continuous learning and commitment to the subjects who learn.

Next, we have the table with the contrastive comparison of the identity characteristics that teachers attribute to their performance in the school.

Table 3

Identity characteristics that teachers attribute to their performance in the school

Identity characteristics of the school	TEACHERS				
	Green	Red	Blue	Rose	Yellow
Specific action in the school	It is a "vocation test", due to the socioeconomic and affective needs of students, which demand more emotional than academic attention. He stressed the importance of patience, organization and adaptation to deal with the specific conditions of the school and the students.	School requires emotional resistance and psychological preparation. Separate students' problems from personal life. Difficulty in public transport.	It would be essential for each teacher to have an ambient room, adapted to their discipline, especially in the case of Arts.	Resilience to face the challenges of the school.	Empathy to understand the context of vulnerability and without feeling guilty when formal learning has not completely achieved the desired goal.
Belonging	The teachers are proud to work at the school, with good relationships with each other and with the students.	Despite the challenges, she recognizes a strong sense of belonging among both	He says that both teachers and students feel part of the school. He mentions that the	Students who are more present and motivated, belonging has been	Teachers and students like to be in school.

	However, this is not perceived by the students, many seem not to value the school, seeing it with a certain lack of interest, as an institution with low rates and little demand.	teachers and students. He reports that today he would not like to leave, because he feels that he already understands the functioning of the institution, the profile of the students and the dynamics with his colleagues.	environment among his classmates is welcoming, with a family atmosphere, and that many students see the school as their first home.	increasing among students.	
Affective bond	Affective need of students. Being a teacher in this school requires empathy, patience, listening and welcoming.	He perceives the affective bond of the students with the school. It emphasizes the need to reinforce the culture that the school is a space for learning content and not just for coexistence and welcoming.	Family atmosphere among teachers. Students, even after the end of classes, continue to attend the school environment because they miss it and identify with the welcoming space.	Affectivity is important to work in the midst of the school context.	He perceives the affectivity in the school's relationships, but points out exceptions.
Students' context	Social and emotional vulnerability. He recognizes the multiplicity of roles he assumes in the school routine. Learning gap.	Balancing formal school learning and social learning for students.	Difficult social and economic context that reflects on classroom situations.	Dealing with the context of social vulnerability brings a huge emotional overload.	The importance of adapting and being motivated to be in this school in the face of challenges.

Source: Prepared by the authors (2025).

Based on the narrative analyses of Block 2, which deals with the characteristics of the teaching performance at the Arco-Iris school, we can observe as a contrastive comparison, in terms of minimum contrast, there is a strong convergence between the teachers' reports regarding the work in a context of social vulnerability.

All teachers point out the need for a sensitive, empathetic and welcoming look at the social and emotional realities of students. The teachers recognize that, in addition to the

content, it is necessary to *"listen"*, *"welcome"* and *"adapt"* to what students experience outside the school.

Vulnerability can be understood as a condition of exposure to risks associated with social factors, such as poverty, low income, and fragile family contexts. Social vulnerability, in particular, is manifested in different dimensions of disadvantage, highlighting the fragility of affective bonds, the precariousness of interpersonal relationships and the incidence of situations of violence.

Living in a context of this nature can limit children and adolescents, making it difficult for them to build life perspectives different from those experienced by their families and communities, perpetuating a cycle of social exclusion. In addition, such conditions can lead to emotional problems, such as low self-esteem. These aspects dialogue with the studies of Silva (2006), Simões (2020), Abreu and Nóbrega (2020), Santos (2022) and De Souza and Magalhães (2021).

Another recurring aspect is the constant adaptation of pedagogical practices and the learning gap, accentuated by the pandemic and family instability, which forces teachers to continuously reinvent their strategies.

When we look at children in situations of social vulnerability, we realize that they develop insecurity and low self-esteem, which affects their relationship with the world and with school. Often, they lose interest in their studies. Therefore, it is a great challenge for the school and the teacher to welcome these children, understand their difficulties and create strategies that make the classes more interesting and motivating for them.

Learning disabilities are caused by various factors such as social, emotional, and also biological factors. These difficulties can arise at any stage of life. The above aspects, about social vulnerability and learning gap, are present in the studies by Simões (2020).

Socioeconomic status also influences the results of the IDEB, since students from families with higher income tend to have more resources and educational support. The age-grade distortion indicates that schools with more students in discrepancy face greater difficulties in achieving good results, reflecting previous problems such as repetition and dropout. All these interconnected factors cause an overload on teachers who need to cope with all these demands. These aspects are similar to those found in the study by Soares and Santos (2024).

In this sense, all teachers report the emotional impact caused by the difficulties faced by students, there is a consensus that the work requires psychological preparation, resilience

and balance to deal with intense situations, such as violence, family neglect and affective need.

In relation to belonging and bonding with the school, we have more similarities than differences. Most teachers (Green, Red, Blue and Yellow) reveal a strong sense of belonging to the institution, as well as perceive that students, to a greater or lesser extent, develop bonds with the school environment. This belonging appears as a factor of permanence and engagement of both educators and students. Only Verde questions whether students really value school, pointing to a more critical view, contrary to the others.

Regarding the most evident contrast in learning, in terms of performance, a scenario of frustration is observed in the face of low academic results, especially in the statements of the Green, Red and Yellow teachers. This fact may be related to the curricular components they teach, Portuguese Language and Mathematics, traditionally the most demanded in external evaluations, such as Sondar³ and the Basic Education Development Index (IDEB). For this reason, the concern with performance was less recurrent in the reports of the other professors.

The IDEB, however, maintains an evaluative logic focused solely on student performance, disregarding structural factors that impact the quality of education, such as school infrastructure, training and remuneration of professionals, investment per student and the socioeconomic context of families. Although statistical indicators can contribute to analysis and policy formulation, they reduce the quality of education to a number, without contemplating the complexity of the school reality. This debate is also addressed by Gil (2021).

In short, in the maximum contrast, the different perceptions about the students' learning stand out. While Green, Red and Yellow; Portuguese and Mathematics teachers show frustration with the low performance rates, this concern appears with less emphasis among the other interviewees.

The contrastive analysis of the characteristics of the teaching performance at the Rainbow School shows that the context of social vulnerability, the affective deprivation of students, the learning gap and the emotional overload converge to shape a teaching practice guided by empathy, adaptation and resistance. In this sense, the importance of self-care in relation to the emotional overload related to the school context is emphasized.

³ Sondar is the evaluation instrument of the Aprende Brasil system, of which the municipal network is a part.

5 RESULTS

Based on the narrative interviews analyzed, the teachers define and characterize the identity aspects of their professional work collective as marked by collaboration, solidarity and empathy. Living with colleagues appears as a positive and strengthening aspect, promoting mutual support and a sense of belonging.

The reports highlight exchanges of experiences, emotional support and collective construction of solutions in the school routine. This collective identity is constituted, above all, in the common experience of acting in a context of social vulnerability, which requires not only technical mastery, but sensitivity, listening, and ethical engagement with the community served, especially related to the heterogeneity of students, the needs experienced, and the need to reinvent pedagogical practice

In this sense, teachers see themselves as reflective professionals, who learn from practice and from colleagues, and who understand their work as more than instruction, as an action that involves care, conflict mediation and constant reinvention. Thus, the identity aspects of the teaching collective of the Arco-Íris school are built at the intersection between resistance, empathy and social commitment, articulating a professional identity that is, at the same time, individual and collective.

In relation to the identity characteristics that the teachers attribute to the performance in the researched school, we can say that the identity characteristics are strongly marked by welcoming, resilience, adaptability and affective involvement with the students. Teaching is understood as a practice crossed by emotional, ethical and social dimensions.

In addition, teachers express a sense of belonging to the school, perceiving themselves as part of a community that shares challenges and seeks, even with limitations, to promote learning and well-being of students. The pedagogical practice is built in constant dialogue with the context, requiring teachers to be open to the shortcomings presented.

Another relevant aspect in relation to the performance in school concerns the need to establish limits between professional and personal life. In contexts marked by social vulnerability, such as the Arco-Íris school, it is essential that teachers are able to differentiate the challenges faced by students from those who, as educators, are in a position to welcome and intervene.

From this perspective, this separation of professional and personal life does not imply indifference, but rather care for one's own mental health, avoiding emotional exhaustion and

professional illness. Thus, preserving this balance is perceived as an essential strategy for self-protection and sustainability of teaching practice in adverse contexts.

However, to be a teacher at the Arco-Íris school is also to be a conflict mediator, an agent of social transformation and a professional who integrates his personal trajectory into the collective construction of the school. These elements show a teaching identity that goes beyond the curricular content and is based on values such as solidarity, social commitment and resilience.

6 CONCLUSIONS

The development of this study, centered on the (re)construction of the professional identity of teachers at the Arco-Íris school, located in Santa Maria – RS, proved to be significant in multiple dimensions. From the attentive listening to the narratives of teachers who work in a context of social vulnerability, it was possible to understand how the daily challenges, the human bonds and the structural aspects of the school directly influence the ways of being and being in teaching.

In the social sphere, the research reveals the complexity of teaching in contexts marked by inequalities, affective deficiencies and social instability. Teachers, far from acting only as transmitters of content, are agents of welcoming, resistance and social transformation. The teacher identity built in this scenario is forged in empathy, adaptability, and ethical commitment to students and their families, highlighting the role of the public school as a space for protection and human development.

For the school institution, the results offer valuable subsidies to reflect on the organization of pedagogical work and the strengthening of collective spaces. We note the strong emphasis on empathy, welcoming, flexibility and institutional belonging of the teachers.

As a synthesis of the results, it is highlighted that the teaching identity at the Arco-Íris school is constantly tensioned by a challenging daily life, but also fed by affective bonds, a sense of belonging and the desire to make a difference. The (re)construction of identity is, therefore, a dynamic process, situated between resistance and exhaustion, autonomy and loneliness, collective commitment and individual trajectories.

It is noteworthy that the development of this research faced some important challenges. One of them was the resistance of some teachers to participate, which caused a limited number of participants. This fact may be related to the lack of time of teachers in the

face of the demands of the profession, or even the fear of exposing their perspectives and pedagogical practices.

Also, we can mention the specific cut of only one school with a study limitation. Although the qualitative deepening allows a good understanding of the phenomenon, the expansion to other school contexts could enrich the comparative analysis. However, in view of the time of the research, this expansion would become unfeasible.

For future research, it is suggested to expand the study to other education systems or schools with distinct characteristics, the inclusion of interviews with managers and/or families, in addition to the exploration of institutional strategies that contribute to the strengthening of professional identity in challenging environments. It would also be relevant to further investigate the impact of continuing education and emotional support networks among teachers as preventive factors in the face of teacher illness.

Completing this research was more than an academic exercise; It was an act of listening, recognition and commitment to teaching in its most human form. As a researcher and teacher at the Arco-Íris school, this work is more than an academic study, it is a reflection of how transformative teaching can be even in the face of difficulties.

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