

## Teacher Identity and Sociopolitical and Professionalization Demands. An Analysis of Their Relation in Light of a New Systemic Paradigm: the Three-Dimensional Spiral of Sense

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### Abstract

This research has been done in the field of Education, Sociology and Social and Organizational Psychology and forms part of a larger complementary research program. We cite: 1) Studies carried out with secondary level and university educators seeking to contrast psychosocial and other factors related to teacher training that influence teaching practice and teaching identity, versus feelings of failure, burnout and fatalism. 2) Research with teachers from different countries (Argentina, Spain, France and Paraguay) seeking to observe the weight that the macro-context has on issues that both teachers and their institutions face at the micro-level. 3) Currently, we are continuing this research, though this time analyzing the shared representations that university students have of the most urgent problems their professors face. The methodology utilized was quantitative-qualitative: questionnaires, semi-structured surveys including open phrases which allowed actors to speak freely and, in the case of the French-Argentine research with IUFM professors, a special qualitative technique was applied: hierarchical evocation. This allowed us to determine which aspects related to professional pathways (objective and subjective) formed part of the “core” of social or shared representations and which were secondary aspects at the periphery of said core. Our findings show non-linear relationships between study variables – Expectations, Satisfaction and Achievement – and self-sustained interplay along three levels: micro individual, meso organizational and macro social. These are interpreted in light of a new systemic paradigm in human and social sciences: “The Three-Dimensional Spiral of Sense”.

**Keywords:** Teacher Identity – Professional Achievement – Expectations – Satisfaction – New Paradigm

### I. Introduction

Research on the issue of teachers, particularly that which takes into account the growing demands of the context – both macro social and immediate and organizational – and its relationship to Professionalization, not always in agreement with the competencies currently required, has been addressed within a Research Program that comprises various instances.

Here we focus on: 1) Research with teachers from different countries (Argentina, Spain, France and Paraguay) seeking to observe the weight that the macro-context has on issues that both teachers and their institutions face at the micro-level, addressing the Argentine case. 2) Studies carried out with secondary level and university educators seeking to contrast psychosocial and other factors related to teacher training that influence teaching practice and teaching identity, versus feelings of failure, burnout and fatalism.

Other complementary research has also been carried out, directed by Aparicio (Argentina), at different levels (secondary level, tertiary level and university level). Their characteristics – theoretical framework, objectives, hypothesis/questions, variables, methods and results – will be presented here briefly.

The models include personal and professional factors (the education-employment relationship); social and psychosocial factors (expectations, achievements, socio-professional mobility); and institutional and structural or macro factors (social, political-educational and economic)

These factors were observed in their sustained interaction (links, back and forth) and in light of a systemic perspective *sui generis* that plays out on three levels: macro-meso-micro-macro<sup>1</sup>.

The methodology used was quantitative (statistical analysis, a semi-structured survey) but mainly qualitative (hierarchical evocations, interviews). The results, particularly the qualitative ones, show that for each study, the rich interactions underlying the continuance or innovation processes have an impact on teacher pathways and on identity, frequently related to Professionalization (Silva and Aparicio, 2015). In effect, the abrupt changes present in our globalized world do not find parallels in education, which is not always sufficient in terms of competencies in traditional disciplines (especially social and collective/metacompetencies necessary to bring about change). This generates ruptures in teachers' personal and professional worlds, which affects their insertion and mobility as well as their levels of satisfaction and even health.

A number of questions guided our research: What issues are found in terms of insertion and professional development? What relationship is found between education received and that given by the system? Do teachers perceive differences between the world of institutional mandates, life in the classroom, resources provided by the system and parent demands? Were their expectations met? What frustrations contributed? What psychosocial/organizational factors would they point out as negative (burnout, falling levels of expectations, workplace climate, little recognition...) and positive (coping, resilience, engagement)? Did they have opportunities for personal and professional growth? Which factors would they prioritize looking towards change and improvement? What complaints would they make regarding the macro system, its policies and reforms?

Before presenting our research, we describe the epistemological pillars that will allow us to interpret our findings.

The fundamental interest that underlies this complementary research is found in the analysis of the impact (explanatory/quantitative level) and comprehension (qualitative level) of *psychosocial factors* on teacher achievement within the context of the international patterns related to Quality Assessment at University. It should be noted that the prevailing criteria for quality assessment are efficiency, political effectiveness, efficacy and relevance.

It should be mentioned here that this Assessment was started late in Argentina, in 1995, when University Quality, combined with context, is first considered a priority. University polices emphasize the need to carry out systemic analyses. However, Assessment comes down to figures, statistics, diagnoses, input and output, but the human processes which lie at the base of such figures remain unknown in the Argentine system and, more globally, within the international framework, as has been noted in previous literature (Aparicio, 1995).

It was a challenge to carry out a systemic analysis of a factor with an impact on achievement at the macro level, and of the impact of the macro or micro organizational contexts on individuals. My research is oriented in that direction, i.e., towards the search for a more holistic and comprehensive approach to analyzing the "mechanisms" and/or factors that, when interacting, anticipate achievement on three levels or in three dimensions: the psycho-individual, the meso-institutional/organizational and the macro.

This new approach (Aparicio, 2015), established in the scientific production of 2005 (a); 2006 (a and b), 2007 (a and b) and 2009a comprises explanation and comprehension, quantitative and qualitative methodology, macro-micro-macro strategy analysis, processes and results, diachronic and synchronic and retrospective and prospective analyses, and transdiscipline (Aparicio 2010).

Finally, teaching – which demonstrates circuits of feedback – is at present greatly affected by Professionalization.

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Publications from 2012 and even more from 2015, year in which the author publishes her theory "The Three Dimensional Spiral of Sense".

The set of factors mentioned has an impact at the level of identity. To this effect, we have found identities which are more "achieved" and others which are more "broken", finding cases in which teachers try to change their methods. In these teacher pathways, macro national, meso organizational and micro factors are at play.

## II. Theoretical Framework

### 1. Professionalization and Identity

Career pathways, like identity, are in my opinion, an intersection of a certain history, a biography, and the relational/structural level. That is, a context favoring or impairing the realization of different levels (Dubar, 1991; Aparicio, 2009 f). In fact, all identities are interwoven between the individual and "others" (a system – or systems – and an organization – or organizations – recognized or not) and compel the individual to develop identity strategies for "survival" (Goffman, 1963), given the gap between what is desired and what is imposed/denied. This is due to the existence of mechanisms (often times far from necessities and disregarding relevance or response to contextual needs, in spite of this being an important criterion for assessing organizational quality,...) We will later refer to these aspects when dealing with Professionalization.

The issue of Professionalization has been analyzed by research carried out with different populations (university graduates, drop-outs, students who take longer to complete their studies, teachers, etc.), covering more than 20 years of study at the National University of Cuyo (UNCuyo) (see Aparicio 2015, chap.I).

We have worked on two core issues: identity related to professionalization in the field of education, and professional insertion.

Professionalization has been a source of debate since the 1980s (Lang, 1999). On the one hand, the effects of "overcrowding" in higher education (Bourdoncle & Demailly, 1998) have emphasized the need to consolidate certain competencies and sets of knowledge essential for professional practice and its corollary, social recognition of professional groups (Bourdoncle, 1993). The professionalization of individuals (training in an existing field) or of the activities (construction and/or redefinition of new profiles of an existing profession) demands the implementation of new mechanisms. On the other hand, as regards this research, the conditions of professional practice in the working world have changed, and professional insertion, as well as duration and promotion, represent a complex problem with numerous variables.

Briefly, the fast-paced changes within the professional world demand innovative transformations at training institutions and consolidation of new competencies valued by the market. This could have an influence on professional and institutional identity improvements.

There are many institutional efforts which have not always been accepted. In the specific field of training, new professionals encounter various difficulties, in addition to lack of recognition. Some authors even speak of de-professionalization of graduates in this field, as they are left behind in a process of "proletarianization" (Ozga & Lawn, 1981). There exist other problems as well: "semi-professional" status in a broad sense (Etzioni, 1969) and the devaluation of graduates' image in the field of education, along with an ever growing general weakening (burnout) (Tardiff & Lessard 1999; Maroy, 2006; Aparicio, 2006 a, 2006 b, 2007 a, 2007 b, 2009 a, 2009 b, 2009 c, 2013 a).

In general, considering the existing literature, we can say that there is a certain tension between the area of work and the area of training, as well as between the expectations at the moment of vocational choice and the actual experience in the professional environment; also, between the "ideal" situation expected by students and the real one of teaching graduates; between the representation of the teachers and their world experience. Is there an identity crisis as regards the deep changes in the labor market and as regards expectations? Is there a certain overprescription in the institutions to respond to the changes in the labor market, along with an underprescription in the means used for such responses? In addition, this issue of institutional and even disciplinary identities, as well as the identity reconstruction process, is accompanied, as has been mentioned, by current conditions of insertion, duration and professional mobility; all of them having an impact on professional careers (Dubar 1991, 2000 a, b and c).

Identity crisis as a result of deep changes within the market is clearly shown in the perspectives engineers have as regards their professional future (Aparicio, 2013 a). Identity is, then, the result of a history and a certain time marked by specific characteristics.

Finally, we must give some thought to the identity aspect. In fact, we consider that, along with the institutional issue – affected by the problem of uncertainty – in Argentina, conditions are favorable for identity crises. Uncertainty prevails.

When considering the changes in the conditions of university professionals' practices, it is interesting to carry out an interdisciplinary analysis of their situation from the educational and the psychosocial (expectations, pessimism/optimism, satisfaction, non-conformism, anomy, etc.) viewpoints to determine the impact of these new contexts on health and identity, looking to improve the respective dynamic and interactive systems.

Two final words about this theme: Identity and Professionalization.

As regards *Identity*, we cannot expand any more at this point. We refer to our own work and other international literature (Lipiansky, 2008). There the reader will be able to find different forms of identity (ethnic, professional, cultural, sexual,...); different approaches, sometimes opposites (unity, decent ration, essentialism vs. constructivism, difference vs. resistance); identity in terms of transaction. The processes related to Identity are also shown (individualization, identification, attribution and introjection, conservation, realization); as are the most prominent perspectives (behaviorism, genetic, clinical, social and psychosocial views...); perspectives associated with cultural anthropology, symbolic interactionism, phenomenology, and systemism). Identity appears in the interweaving of history, biography and relationships. It always involves an "alter" – other – who may or may not recognize and may or may not accept the individual. Related to this, different identity strategies are used to deal with new, unexpected and bewildering situations; these strategies were found "in vivo" in the accounts of individuals in complementary research.

As regards *Professionalization*, as is widely known, it affects people, job positions, professions and groups, and so called Professionalism stems from it. There exist different approaches to the issue. Kaddouri (2008) makes reference to the institutional and collective projects carried out by some groups which lead to professionalism, and personal projects, i.e., originated as an individual initiative. Once again, here we can see our levels, the micro and meso levels. These projects have different levels of development according to areas, countries, etc.

When the personal project comes into conflict with the institutional one, a gap is produced, along with tensions and the implementation of identity strategies (Goffman, 1963).

As Kaddouri states (2008:149), Professionalization has two purposes: to acquire collective capacities, previously dealt with by Bourdoncle & Demally (1998), and to internalize cultural and professional rules (autonomy, polyvalence, team work). Thus, those who are responsible within the labor market try to have individuals feel identified with the aims of the company and get involved with the identity model the company follows. However, conflict often arises between the personal and the collective projects and the individual must resort to identity strategies.

Professionalization may, in fact, encourage transformation regarding those identities that have been injured due to a break between the internalized and the imposed models; it may encourage a change of one or more identity components (specializing and polyspecializing professionalization). It may also encourage the existing dynamic identity to be maintained as the individuals are satisfied with their jobs, i.e., the aim is to consolidate identity and to keep/consolidate competencies. A successful transaction can be reached between the personal and the institutional projects. The threatened identity can also be confirmed. This occurs in individuals with little or a lack of social recognition (whether because they do not have the necessary competencies, or due to absence of updating, etc.). In short, we find transforming identity strategies when a change of profession is needed because there is a broad gap between the inherited and expected identities, maintenance, attempting reaffirmation in view of threat, and reconstruction. In all cases, Professionalization tends to reduce the gap; this gap is smaller in some cases than in others.

Finally, it is difficult to find a link to the burnout syndrome, marked by a fall in expectations within wearing-out environments: precisely here is where Professionalization becomes essential as regards personal and professional achievement as well as organizational improvement itself (Levy-Leboyer, 1971). This is established in the theories themselves regarding factors underlying the burnout syndrome (Freudenberger; 1974; Maslach & Pines & Aronson, 1988). "Founding fathers" could also be considered Leiter, Maslach (1988); Maslach & Jackson (1981); Maslach & Jackson (1986). and as regards the Expectancy Valence Theory Feather & Davenport, 1982 a and b; Seligman, 1991. The author, 2004 a and b.

According to the author, the greater the Expectations and the fewer possibilities for self-realization, individuals are more likely to fall into depression or show symptoms of deteriorating health. As such, it is important to understand the teaching

issue from teachers, principals and aids themselves. In effect, our findings show that what is upheld by the media is frequently very contaminated by “beliefs” and “ideology”, which contributes to further devaluation of the profession and consolidation of the image of a profession of little recognition, very far from the election of a vocation (Aparicio, 2013 b).

This issue, applied to the work environment – here teaching – has been addressed by Ortiz Zabala ,1985 ; Aparicio, 2015.

We see how Expectations, Satisfaction and Achievement are related to Pathways, pathways in which Professionalization currently plays an active part.

Here we present the focus of our research.

## **2. Complementary Research**

Before describing the two studies, we will highlight others that came before or were carried out during the same period (i.e. Aparicio, 2015 a). In these studies, carried out not only at the university level but also at the Tertiary level (INFD) and secondary level, there is an interplay of macro, meso and micro individual factors as regards the issue of teaching.

### **2.1. Tertiary Education (Teacher Training Institutes, INFD) and Professionalization in Argentina: A theoretical analysis of the macro relationship (legal and philosophical framework) and its impact on educational institutions and on teachers (meso and micro levels)**

Several historical, political and administrative aspects have combined to shape teachers’ “weak identity” and their possibilities of self-fulfillment since 2007, when the INFD (Instituto de Formación Docente – Teacher Training Institute) was created by the Law of National Education No 26.206, which contributed to the consolidation of a weakened professional identity (See. MECyT, INFD, 2007). Among them we can mention: the diversification of the functions of teacher training, the inadequate importance given to research and abrupt administrative changes (until 1988, training was part of high schools). In that year, such training began to fall under the administration of the National Board of Higher Education, until 1994 when education administration passed to the jurisdiction of the provinces.

Such policies caused visible effects (transference, curriculum changes, institutional accreditation) and invisible effects (fragmentation of the system and a subsequent *lack of organic identity*).<sup>1</sup>

Other factors also have an influence on this weakened identity: the concept that teaching has a status as a semi-profession, a devalued image of the teacher, the ever-growing demands from the context which have turned teachers into “social workers”, the characteristics of the new students teachers receive with which they cannot always cope, the gap between the “ideal teacher” and the “real teacher”, or between the expected world at the moment of choosing careers and the real world. All of this makes “sense” or not to teachers’ daily practices and professional life.

These problems, among others, reveal the renewed need for professionalization within the framework of Teacher Training.

Regarding the general macro-meso institutional framework, and despite the advances introduced by the INFD at the micro level, the practicing teacher currently demonstrates a weakened identity. As we can see, the issue works at three levels. The social crisis has an impact on the organizational crisis and on teachers, who, in spite of being weakened, reinforce the lack of identity in their own institution and in the educational system.

### **2.2. Teacher Training, Professionalization and Identity: An Analysis Based on Empirical Research**

We will make brief reference to the author’s research done at the educational level, in which there is a combination of epistemological basis, identity related matters, professionalization and professionalism.

#### **2.2.1. International Level**

##### **2.2.1.1. Teachers’ Careers, Professionalization and Employability. A French-Argentine Comparative Study on Teacher Training “Maisons familiales” and other Institutions (CONICET- National Council of Scientific Research, Argentina, Argentina and Université Lille 1)**

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<sup>1</sup> This study was presented in Sherbrooke, at the inauguration of the IRPÉ Institute (2009 b and c).

This study develops along two core lines: Identity and Professionalization in the field of teacher training and teachers' professional insertion into the field. The issue of Professionalization has already been presented. The important fact to remember here is that, from the results of this comparative study, we are aware of the need: a) to go deeper into the issue of Professionalization because of all the possibilities it offers and, particularly, into the development of competencies (not only skills), which are nowadays requisite for professional practice to cope with new demands, conditions of professional practice, circumstances that impact the teacher's future, their expectations, their representations and the depreciation of their image within the context and b) to work in order to implement new mechanisms along these lines and thus avoid breaks in identity.<sup>1</sup>

Within this framework, the links among the personal, training and professional performances become an issue of great worry. Our hypotheses were the following: a) There exists tension between the field in which teachers work and between what is professionally expected at the moment of starting work and what has been achieved during day-to-day practice. b) Some psychosocial factors in particular impact the achievement level and the feeling of achievement (satisfaction). Along this line, one of our purposes is to determine, precisely, which core variables (age, gender, etc.) and professional variables (Engagement, n-Ach, Resilience, Coping) have an impact on the teachers' dependent variable in the field of Education (French, Lille 1 and UNCuyo, Argentine:), as well as their representations regarding the value of education in favor of professional and personal recognition and development. There is feedback between the macro social level (two countries with different idiosyncrasies and different professionalization levels), the meso-organizational level (intuitions related to the aims pursued, which also provide institutional identity) and the micro level associated with the individual, the last and, paradoxically, the first actor in the system, since, without them, the system would not exist.

Methodology: It was qualitative (interview, semi-structured survey).

Sample: We worked with Teacher Training Institutes in Argentina and similar ones in France called "Maisons familiales", which receive students with different characteristics.

Results: We already have some results which permit us to determine the factors associated with professional achievement and professionalization for each course of study (two countries involved), as well as those factors consolidating or breaking their professional identities. This was achieved by comparing the representations associated with professional identity under the current "devaluation of the teaching career" and the widespread discomfort within the labor market.

### **2.2.1.2. Teachers' Careers, Professionalization and Identity. A French-Argentine Comparative Study on Teacher Training. (CONICET- Argentina / Université Paris 8, France)**

The framework is the same as in our previous study. It is a French-Argentine comparative study, but this time, they are teachers working in Argentina (Mendoza) at the INFD, in urban, rural and poor areas, and teachers from the l'Université Paris 8, working in similar conditions (Aparicio, 2008).

Regarding methodology, it is similar, with emphasis on the qualitative aspect. We use techniques that allow us to compare shared (social) representations from both groups concerning their needs, problems, strengths and weaknesses of their institutions and of their education, especially as regards training, support and guiding mechanisms, and globally speaking professionalization mechanisms. In addition, we compare the core philosophies which have led to reform in France and Argentina with respect to teacher training (it should be noted that Argentina tried to follow the French model).

Results: They start to show similarities that refer to problems teachers share even though they belong to different countries. There are also differences, and above all, there is the influence of the macro-social aspect on the interpretation teachers and the media have regarding their problems (this is quite interesting from the point of view of our theory based on three interactive mainstays)<sup>2</sup>.

The self-sustenance of the three systems (core mainstays of our perspectives) has become evident, as well as the presence of each in the others: what is "in the air" within the macro-social contexts in Argentina has been internalized by teachers and authorities. Also, the institutions regard the issue in terms of inclusion almost exclusively. Culture manifests itself inter-

<sup>1</sup> The professor Ghislaine Martin Galley also collaborated.

<sup>2</sup> Thus, for example, during the last few years, Argentina has regarded inclusion as a central policy. Inclusion and Exclusion, as well as all the issues they lead to, appear repeatedly, almost invasively. On the contrary, such issues have never been considered in France, much less in those terms.

penetrating the different levels or spheres. The national, organizational/institutional and personal cultures self-sustain interactively.

### **2.2.2. Other Research in Argentina (INFD and secondary level)**

We refer to only two studies.

#### **2.2.2.1. *The Issue of Teaching and Identity. A Case Study with Teachers Belonging to the School System (INFD)***

We will make brief reference to another study conducted by the author that shows clear self-sustenance at the three levels (Martínez & Aparicio, 2013). It is part of a National Program (CAIE) funded by international organizations in order to detect the main problems affecting teachers.

**Methodology:** We studied almost 600 papers written by teachers from all levels of the School System who work in urban, rural and poor areas in Argentina. The teachers were asked to write about a problem in the classroom which, in their opinion, they had managed to solve and how they did so. The aim was to analyze the recurring practices and solutions (often times, as far as we could see, they were symbolic and/or even illusive) in order to improve such practices through the implementation of specific mechanisms. An increase in Professionalization and Professionalism was one of the objectives of the Program.

**Techniques:** We worked with document analysis and content analysis. The nodes, the categories and subcategories of teachers at different levels of the system (preschool, primary and secondary), in different kinds of institutions (public and private) and different contexts or areas (rural, urban, and poor areas) revealed very significant inter-penetration.

**Results:** The problems prioritized at each of these levels or contexts differed significantly and consistently from those prioritized at other levels or in other contexts. This revealed identities interwoven between individuals, the institutions they belong to, and their sociocultural contexts. Thus, the relevance of context (more demanding and, very often, even dangerous, according to the teachers' representations) appear in this study by Martínez, more strongly in poor areas, if we consider the occurrence of the problems the teachers referred to in their papers. This coincides with the findings in other countries with which we worked, such as France. From the operational point of view, it is a contribution to the design of teacher support mechanisms; from the epistemological point of view, self-sustenance clearly appears among the macro-social Cosmo vision, the school institution Cosmo vision (differentiated by the criteria mentioned above), and the teachers' cosmovisions.

#### **2.2.2.2. *Other Studies at the Secondary Level***

Finally, research at the secondary school level has indeed been carried out (Borsani & Aparicio, 2013 b). Let us simply point out here that the mainstays of the theory have also appeared. Individuals, institutions and contexts interplay in a self-sustained movement, as regards the internalized culture.

### **3. Core Research: Research Studies (University and INFD)**

#### **3.1. Teachers' University Careers, Professionalization and Employability (CONICET - National Council of Research, Argentina)**

Brief Theoretical Framework

This research analyzes University teachers' careers, as well as those of teachers from institutes with similar training programs; careers influenced by history and a social imaginary, but also by context and the sudden changes of late. All of this will have an impact both on teachers' identity and on their employability. The population includes teachers from different areas, levels, departments, provinces and from three foreign countries. Such variety provides a chance to recognize status and contextual differences concerning job mobility (careers), objective levels of achievement and satisfaction, dominant representations, and differences between expectations from the field and actual daily experiences. The model includes not only socio-cultural and base factors, but also psychosocial, organizational and structural factors.

In the present-day workplace, such structural factors could influence both professional careers and personal development. Thus, continuing studies with a high regional and international impact have been completed. The methodology employed is quantitative (statistical, systemic analysis) but, mainly, qualitative (hierarchical evocations, word associations and in-depth interviews). All of that allows for knowledge of the core problems existing in each Study Program itself (specific

scenarios)<sup>1</sup> and in its relation to the working world (core shared representations), as well as of the differences between what was expected and what was actually achieved in the actors' prescribed and real world. Semi-structured surveys are also carried out, and a macro-micro-méso-macro strategy is applied.

Another objective, at the level of application or intervention, is to inform authorities who make decisions in the field of education about such results in order to implement programs to overcome problems which somehow hurt organizations today and which upset teachers in general.

### Methodology

Sample: It includes newly graduated teachers (less than 5-years of experience) and those with little experience who graduated from private and public teacher training institutions in Paraguay, Spain and Argentina, teachers who hold a university degree currently working at universities and at the tertiary level (INFD) or high school; so their representations and problems may change. It also includes teachers working with hard and soft sciences at universities and tertiary level institutes (INFD) who have studied at different times under different philosophies. The purpose is to compare different disciplinary identity profiles and identity strategies.

### Results

Here we refer only to findings for university professors. Through the use of the hierarchical evocation technique, we were able to determine which aspects were at the heart of the social representations (shared by the group) and which were secondary or peripheral. We will now refer to some of the nodes addressed, within which we distinguished categories using that which the professors themselves expressed. These are: What did you prioritize when choosing this career? What expectations do you have of your profession? Did your practice of the profession fulfill these expectations? How do you define a professor (identity)? What aspects would you identify as positive factors or strong points? What would be the negative or weak points? What are your thoughts about recognition? What would you ask the institutional authorities to change urgently looking to quality? What would you ask of politicians? What are your main concerns? What difficulties do you have in your daily activity?

Here we cannot speak of each of these aspects as each one deserves its own publication.

If we focus on "Expectation" (what professors expected of the career when choosing it and in accordance with the social imaginary), the only category that is located in the fourth or least significant periphery was the "political-institutional" category. This means that the group never held expectations regarding policies. On the other hand, curiously, three categories entered into the nucleus or heart: "affective" aspects, "education" and "future development of the workplace". This presents significant differences with that which was found in France.

Nevertheless, if we observe the responses to the question Did your practice of the profession fulfill these expectations?, the only category that enters into the nucleus is the "affective" category. There were conflicts, but also satisfaction. The rest of the categories fall into the least significant peripheral zone.

Let us concentrate on "difficulties" and "concerns" for a moment. The issue – in the international literature – frequently focuses on these aspects. The results show a dominance of affective aspects. Professors do not cease to suffer from tiredness, burnout, unease, stress and feelings of impotence (Blanchard-Laville 2000, 2001 and 2013; Montgomery & Rupp, 2005).

Violence (Debarbieux, 1998, 1999) and alienation also concerns professors: there exist too many mandates, many institutional demands, little understanding and few resources (psychosocial particularly) to deal with daily situations. Added to this is a lack of professionalization.

This all comes together in fragile identities (that sometimes lead to an abandoning of the profession before the five year mark or to the adoption of survival strategies) (Woods, 1997).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> We say "specific or situated scenarios" because we not only worked with university professors but also with tertiary professors and professors from other countries.

<sup>2</sup> See a list of the author's publications in order shortly. A synthesis can be found in Aparicio 2005, 2009 and numerous recent articles on professionalization and identity.



Finally, demands of politicians were key. Non-conformism dominates. Professors demand better salaries, greater professionalization and better working conditions, among other aspects.

### **3.2. University and secondary level teachers. A study of the social and psychosocial factors that impact their pathways and satisfaction (Argentina)**

This is a comparative study directed by Aparicio on the issue of secondary level and university level educators (Aparicio et al, 2010 a). Researchers observe social and organizational problems that impact teachers' health (burnout, fatalism) and their life projects. They also analyzed difficulties, expectations, motivations, feeling of fulfillment, hopes for the future and factors that influence these hopes, the valuation of the devaluation of teachers on the part of parents and the effects of this devaluation at the political and economic (salary) level, among others.

The objectives of this research were: a) to determine levels of emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and personal frustration (central components of burnout according to the "founding fathers") shown by university professors; b) to compare these levels to levels found for secondary level teachers; c) to analyze the relationship between different *burnout* levels and socio-demographic, motivational and professional factors; d) to understand the relationship that exists between resilience and coping on the one hand, and the burnout suffered by university professors and secondary level teachers on the other. More specifically, we are interested in understanding the role that personal and professional expectations play as related to Professionalization and how these influence teachers' levels of exhaustion or feelings of fulfillment, impacting their identities and pathways in diverse ways. e) Finally, from the epistemological point of view (the author's theory), to observe what relationship existed between the macro national contexts – growing demands from the immediate context (parents) and political-educational changes -, the meso institutional level – university or secondary level – and the micro individual level (particularly regarding teachers' feelings of satisfaction or non-conformism when faced with limits they observe in the general education system and in policies/programs adopted and levels of Professionalization).

Theoretical framework: We refer here to the founding fathers (the English school particularly) cited above (Freudenberger, 1974 and others).

Methodology: Our sample of university professors was made up of professors from the National University of Cuyo (N = 92) and secondary level teachers from an urban school (N = 42). We applied quantitative and qualitative techniques. The interval of confidence was 95.5%.

#### **Results:**

##### **For university professors:**

###### *a. Quantitative*

-Descriptive quantitative analysis

This analysis allowed us to observe: 1) The socio-demographic, professional and motivational profile; 2) the absence of burnout for this university group for the subscale that measures Burnout according to the *Maslach Burnout Inventory* (Emotional exhaustion, Depersonalization and Personal fulfillment), in contrast to what was expected by the authorities who requested the study.

-Bivariate analysis (*burnout* vs. base variable) – This analysis shows that the socio-emotional situation of the family, especially, is a significant factor in Personal Fulfillment; on the contrary, weekly working hours, salaries and main tasks (teaching or research predominantly) are associated significantly with Emotional Exhaustion. As regards the sub-scale of Depersonalization, the results were not statistically significant. We also found significant statistical relationships with the Resilience and Coping factor (factors that go against burnout, acting as barriers). Nevertheless, we are not able to address this here.

###### *b. Qualitative:*

Our findings, gleaned from the hierarchical evocation technique, show that university professors have not fallen into the burnout syndrome as they have, precisely, high expectations, family support and more offers of Professionalization than

those found at secondary education levels. In addition, they demonstrate greater levels of Resilience and Coping. The triangulation shows consistent results.

### Secondary level teachers:

Here the situation changes. There is burnout, less development of coping strategies and less resilience. Exhaustion is due fundamentally to society's demands, to the devaluation of the teacher's image and to violence found in schools, as well as to little possibility of professionalization systematized by the State, to few chances of improvements in salaries and too few opportunities for personal and professional development in the future.

To conclude, we may say that the brief analysis carried out with this research demonstrates the dynamic interplay (feedback) between individuals, organizational contexts and macro lines. In addition, using this strategy of analysis based on the authors theory – "The Three Dimensional Spiral of Sense" – has allowed us to capture the deeper meaning of the educator issue, beyond statistical findings that allow for the explanation of a phenomenon but not for real understanding of its underlying aspects. Without this understanding, there are few alternatives for improving the quality of teachers' lives. The relationship individuals/context/individuals emerges in the differences found between university and secondary level educators.

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