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The interest of Education students in teaching^I

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to analyze the representations of Education undergraduates about the teaching profession as well as to understand their interest in being a teacher, especially in early childhood, primary and secondary education. Research included 120 students from the Education degree course at Universidade Federal de Sergipe (UFS), both in an intermediate or senior stage. Students were asked to answer a self-applicable questionnaire that inquired about their representations about being a teacher, how they evaluated the choice for that specific degree and their interest in the teaching profession. Data was statistically treated and contents were analyzed according to Bardin (2010). The main results include that students gave high importance to teachers for society but they acknowledge that the profession is not socially valued, a factor that emerged as one of the major reasons for dissatisfaction at the choice of the Education degree. Even though a significant number of respondents (79.8 percent) mentioned their intention of being a classroom teacher, most of them did not show interest in a long-term (over 10 years' time) dedication to this activity. Results allowed to consider that, although the positive image of teacher's social role contributes to add interest in or admiration for the profession, this sole aspect seems insufficient to motivate the permanence of students in such career, pointing to the need for changes in the working conditions and in the context of social devaluation of the teaching profession, aspects perceived as negative by these students.

Keywords

Teaching profession – Interest in teaching – Social representation of teacher..

*I- This article originates from the thesis by the first author, written under the supervision of the second author, whose title was *Você quer ser professor? – Um estudo sobre o interesse de licenciandos em pedagogia pela profissão docente* (Do you want to be a teacher? – [A study of the interest by Education undergraduates in the teaching profession). The work as submitted to the Graduate Program in Social Psychology*

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O interesse de estudantes de pedagogia pela docência^I

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Resumo

O presente estudo propôs-se a analisar as representações de estudantes de licenciatura em pedagogia acerca da profissão de professor, bem como compreender o interesse dos mesmos pelo exercício da docência, especialmente na educação básica. Participaram da pesquisa 120 alunos dos cursos de pedagogia licenciatura da Universidade Federal de Sergipe (UFS), em fase intermediária ou de conclusão de curso. Foi solicitado aos alunos que respondessem um questionário autoaplicável que investigava representações acerca da profissão de professor, avaliação da escolha do curso de licenciatura e interesse pela profissão docente. Os dados foram tratados com análise estatística e análise de conteúdo baseada em Bardin (2010). Dentre os principais resultados, observou-se que os estudantes atribuíram elevado grau de importância do professor para a sociedade, reconhecendo, porém, que a profissão não é valorizada socialmente, fator que surgiu como uma das principais justificativas para a insatisfação com a escolha do curso de pedagogia licenciatura. Ainda que significativa parte dos respondentes (79,8%) afirmasse pretensão de ensinar em sala de aula, a maioria não manifestou interesse por uma atuação mais duradoura (por mais de dez anos) nessa atividade. Os resultados possibilitaram considerar que, embora a representação positiva da função social do professor contribua para o interesse ou admiração pela profissão, esse aspecto apenas parece insuficiente para motivar a permanência de estudantes nessa carreira, o que aponta para a necessidade de mudanças nas condições de trabalho e no contexto de desvalorização social da profissão docente, aspectos percebidos como negativos por esses estudantes.

I- Este artigo é oriundo da dissertação de mestrado da primeira autora, elaborada sob a orientação da segunda autora, e intitulada *Você quer ser professor?* – Um estudo sobre o interesse de licenciandos em pedagogia pela profissão docente. O trabalho foi apresentado em 2012 junto ao Programa de Pós-Graduação em Psicologia Social da Universidade Federal de Sergipe.

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Palavras-chave

Profissão de professor – Interesse pela docência – Representação social do professor.

Introduction

Research has revealed that, over the past years, in some countries including Brazil, there has been an increasing reduction in the number of youths willing to enter the teaching career, and that low wages are one of major causes. The Plano Nacional de Educação [National Education Plan] (PNE), passed as Act No. 10,172, of January 9th, 2001, when diagnosing the situation of teacher education and the working conditions of the teaching profession, acknowledges that there was a continuous abandonment of the teaching career due to the low salaries and the working conditions that teachers faced in the schools (BRAZIL, 2001).

Authors have denounced a phenomenon of precariousness in the working conditions and in the payment of teachers (OLIVEIRA, 2004; FACCI et al., 2004; LÜDKE; BOING, 2004), added to the loss of prestige, respect, living conditions, purchase power and satisfaction at the teaching profession (LÜDKE; BOING, 2004), as well as the increase in the temporary contracts in public education systems, no wage increase, loss of labor guarantees, inadequacy or lack of career and salary plans (OLIVEIRA, 2004).

Likewise the Brazilian case, changes occurring in the past decades in the educational systems and in society have significantly affected teaching as a job also in the European countries (ESTEVE, 1999; LÜDKE; BOING, 2004). Tardif (2013) points that several factors have been the obstacles to the efforts of development towards the professionalization of teaching – a tendency covering the entire 20th century that has gained thrust from the 1980s on, in a social movement that seeks to raise the status of teachers, in a similar way of professions with higher social appreciation, improve the working conditions and increase autonomy. Among the factors mentioned are the downgrading of salaries and their replacement with salaries for merit according to performance, intensification of the teaching

work characterized by aspects such as added teacher requirements (TARDIF, 2013).

It is noted that the current context is of a fragile professional identity for teachers (LÜDKE; BOING, 2004) and such unfavorable scenario is negatively reflected in the teachers' perception of their own work, which also influences the perception of students who are being trained to enter the teaching career. According to Libâneo (2004, p. 77, original emphasis):

[...] the working conditions and the social devaluation of the teaching profession, in fact, harm the construction of the identification of future teachers with the profession and the theoretical-practical framework that defines the contents and competences that characterize *what to be a teacher is*.

Tardif (2013, p. 564) refers to “grave problems of attraction and retention” faced by the teaching profession, as the abandonment of the profession by teachers has been observed in several countries early in their careers. A similar finding comes from Hargreaves (2002), who mentions that there has been a crisis in hiring teachers in England and Wales, marked by the little enthusiasm of youths to enter the teaching profession. For the author, this fact is caused by educational changes that have been implemented for over a decade in those nations, which even if on behalf of achieving high standards of learning, have restrained the teacher's autonomy and their participation in the planning of teaching as strict curricular prescription and standardization are set forth (HARGREAVES, 2002).

Alves-Mazzotti (2007), investigating teachers' representations of their teaching identity by adopting a test of free evocation of words has found that such representations point to difficulties in exerting the profession associated with the precariousness of the work, such as: build-up of tasks, unfavorable working conditions, loss

of autonomy, downgrading of salaries and lack of free time to improve class planning and for personal and professional development. The study undertaken by the mentioned author also suggested that the depreciation of the teacher affects mostly the professional identity of teachers from the early grades of schooling, if compared to teachers working in middle schools (ALVES-MAZZOTI, 2007).

A nationwide study, whose fieldwork was conducted in the year 2002, sponsored by the United Nations Organization for Education, Science, and Culture (UNESCO) with the purpose of surveying the profile of Brazilian teachers in secondary education, from public and private schools, yielded relevant information to comprehend the socioeconomic, cultural, psychological and structural factors that permeate the world of the teaching profession in Brazil. The socio-demographic and cultural results showed that: most Brazilian teachers (81.3 percent) are female and they have been working in the first eight grades of schooling; the age range of teachers, in Brazil, is concentrated between 26 and 35 years and between 36 and 45 years; most teachers work in a public school (82.2 percent); the working hours in the classroom vary from 21 to 40 hours per week; there is concentration of teachers with higher family income in the private schools, and such teachers are the ones who most attend cultural centers and sport clubs; teachers from public schools show higher frequency in participating in associations of political nature or fighting for some kind of need or demand. Research data point that the most teachers consider themselves as being low-middle class and also reveal regional inequalities related to the teacher's family income; the Northeast area of Brazil is the one with the lowest rate (12.3 percent) of teachers with a family income higher than 10 minimum salaries, while in the opposed end, one finds the Southeast area where 42.1 percent of teachers are included in this level of family income (UNESCO, 2004).

Still in that study, teachers were asked to give their opinion about thirteen situations that

might occur in their everyday work at school. The situations mostly mentioned by the teachers as a problem for performing teaching activities were: time available to grade tests, notebooks (69.3 percent), time available to carry out tasks (54.9 percent) and keeping discipline among the students (54.8%) (UNESCO, 2004).

Concerning the satisfaction of Brazilian teachers to their profession, if compared with the start of their teaching career, the aforementioned research revealed that, out of the teachers who responded the questionnaire,

[...] almost half of them say they are *more* satisfied now than they were at the start of their career (48.1 percent) and 15.3 percent say they are *equally satisfied* [...] [and] teachers who chose the option *less satisfied* are 24.3 percent and those choosing *dissatisfied* are 12.3 percent, a representative amount since it means, in absolute numbers, 208,904 people. However, what draws attention is the fact that even under working conditions that are often hard the ratio of those who say they are satisfied is 63.4 percent (UNESCO, 2004, p. 138).

These figures indicate that most teachers intended to remain in the activity they were performing and did not aspire to get out of the classroom in the near future despite the difficulties they had to face (UNESCO, 2004).

In a study of teachers in Portugal, Gomes et al. (2006) found that

[...] over 25 percent of participants would not choose teaching if they had a new opportunity to choose a university degree, [and] 19% showed a strong desire of giving up the profession in the next five years and about 10 percent are very dissatisfied at their profession and professional activity (GOMES et al., 2006, p. 77).

The same authors discovered through this study a connection between the

increase in the global levels of stress and less professional satisfaction, more physical health problems, feelings of higher pressures of time and excessive workload, greater perception of student's indiscipline behaviors, more emotional exhaustion, greater desire of giving up the profession and less professional satisfaction. It was also found that satisfaction of being a teacher tends to decrease proportionally to the increase in the desire to give up the job, the student's indiscipline behaviors, the paperwork and excessive class hours, emotional exhaustion and physical health problems (GOMES et al., 2006).

A study in England, conducted by Kyriacou and Kunc (2007), investigated the evolution of the secondary-school teachers' expectancies in their early career, along three years, starting in the year they had completed the training to work as a teacher. Results demonstrated that most participants expected to remain in the teaching profession for over ten years, but a slight fall was perceived in the amount of responses along the school year of the preparatory course; in the beginning of the year, 78 percent of participants expected to remain teaching for over ten years while, by the end of the school year, that figure dropped to 69 percent.

A study conducted by Fundação Carlos Chagas, commissioned by Fundação Victor Civita, investigated among 1501 Brazilian senior secondary students the prospects they had to enter a teaching degree. Results showed that whereas students exalted the job of a teacher as having an important and crucial role in the education of individuals, they also saw the teaching profession as underpaid, demanding hard work and with little or almost no social recognition. The study found that only 2 percent of students had chosen Education or other teaching degree as their first option, and that the early grades of primary school included the less attractive level of teaching if they would someday become a teacher (FUNDAÇÃO CARLOS CHAGAS, 2009).

Souto and Paiva (2013), in a study with 67 Mathematics graduates from a Brazilian university, assessed the attractiveness of the teaching career in basic education¹. The research revealed that 46.3 percent of graduates did not intend to work as a teacher of this subject, and 45.2 percent of those teaching in basic education did not intend to go on with that professional activity.

The literature that we have just reviewed shows there are difficulties in being a teacher and they have had a negative impact on the motivation of teachers concerning their permanence in the teaching career. It is plausible to inquire about what teaching degree students think and what they are willing to do in relation to really take a job as a teacher and remain in such professional activity. Do teaching-degree undergraduates want to be a classroom teacher? Are they willing to remain in such profession throughout their professional career?

In reviewing the literature covering this topic, few studies were found about the expectancies of teaching-degree undergraduates in relation to their future work as a teacher. Some studies investigated expectancies of undergraduates from several areas of knowledge about their professional future (NEIVA, 1996; BARDAGI; BOFF, 2010; BARDAGI; HUTZ, 2010; TEIXEIRA; GOMES, 2005). Others dealt with the expectancies of teachers from several fields asking whether they would go on or give up the teaching career, as are the cases of Gomes and collaborators (2006), conducted in Portugal, of Kyriacou and Kunc (2007), with teachers in their early career in England, and the study devised by UNESCO (2004), with Brazilian teachers.

Some researchers addressed specific populations among the teaching degrees, such as the study by Souto e Paiva (2013), which investigated the attractiveness of the teaching career in basic education for graduates from the mathematics teaching-degree course in a university. Studies specifically conducted with

1- Translator's note: In Brazil, *educação básica* [basic education] stands for: early childhood, primary and secondary education.

Education students were also found (NARVAES, 2004; CERQUEIRA et al., 2004; SALES; CHAMON, 2011), but they did not directly focus the students' interest concerning the prospect of remaining in the teaching profession, but rather their motivation in choosing that degree or where they were satisfied with or not. It is therefore clear that there is a need to explore further the perceptions of teaching-degree students regarding their interest in the teaching career, especially the work in basic education.

Another relevant aspect involves the students' conceptions about the work as a teacher and their motivation to embrace such kind of job. Such questions lead to the representations of these students about the teaching profession and may be understood on the grounds of the theoretical approach proposed by Moscovici (2008), according to which social representations are made up of concepts, statements and explanations that interpret and construct the social realities. Such common-sense theories are shaped from pieces of information and value-based judgments resulting from interpersonal experiences (SÁ, 1995). They made up the world, the reality of the individuals, including "the cognitive-evaluative and symbolic dimensions that are present in every form of how someone knows the social reality" (ÁLVARO; GARRIDO, 2006, p. 288).

Sotirakopoulou and Breakwell (1992) advocate for the use of different methodological approaches when studying the social representations, in the sight of how complex this construct is involving a variety of dimensions such as ideas, beliefs, values, practices, feelings, images, attitudes, knowledge and opinions. Thus, they suggest a type of method for collecting and analyzing data according to the component of the social representation to be investigated. They also make it explicit that the check-lists and questionnaires are methods whose advantage is to make it possible to analyze the dissemination of ideas, beliefs, knowledge, attitudes and images in a given population.

This article presents the results of a study whose objectives were to analyze the representations

of teaching-degrees undergraduates in Education about the profession of a teacher as well as to comprehend their interest in working as a teacher.

A reason for choosing the Education degree for the universe of the research is its relevance for the practice of teaching, especially regarding the mastery of didactical and pedagogical contents involving the competences required to obtain a teacher's license. The importance of the education degree can also be seen in the training of education professionals for basic schooling, as set forth by Art. 64 of Act nº 9394 of December 20th, 1996 (Lei de Diretrizes e Bases da Educação Nacional [Act of Guidelines and Grounds of the National Education - LDBEN]):

The training of education professionals for the management, planning, inspection, supervision and counseling for basic education shall be done through degree-achieving courses in Education or in the graduate level, at the discretion of the educational institution, and such training shall guarantee the national common basis (BRASIL, 1996).

Another reason to conduct the study focusing on Education undergraduates was the fact that this has been a degree with higher competition in the last two annual admission tests to enter Universidade Federal de Sergipe (UFS) prior to the study. The degree in Education had in the 2011 admission contest in the mentioned institution, the ratio of 6.28 candidates per opening in the afternoon class and 16.68 candidates per opening in the night class; together they were the most attractive degree in Human Science (SERGIPE, 2011). In the year 2012, the competition among candidates per opening for the Education degree daytime course was 7.12 and 15.12 for the night course (SERGIPE, 2012).

Methodological approach

The research included 120 Education undergraduates from the Federal University of

Sergipe (UFS) who had already completed half of the curricular periods, in order to achieve a sample of students in the intermediate or last phase of the course, therefore with greater probability of having experience of approaching the professional field, as for example those doing the curricular internship.

Out of the total, 116 participants were female and four were male, ranging from 19 to 46 years of age; most of them (57.5 percent) were between 20 and 25 years old. Almost all of them (95.8 percent) had not taken nor was taking another degree and most (65 percent) said they were doing some kind of paid work.

Around 72 percent of students informed they had some practice related to teaching. Among these, 47.1 percent characterized their experience of being a teacher as very good, 34.5 percent as good, and 16.1 percent perceived it as fair. Only 2.3 percent considered it very bad. Thus, the majority tended to assess positively the experience they had in teaching-related experiences. Regarding the types of practices performed, the most mentioned ones had to do with acting as a teacher in internship activities, as a teacher aide and in extra class help.

Data collection utilized a self-applicable questionnaire, with closed, semi-closed and open questions related to the subject of the study. The instrument was devised in order to encompass the investigation of the following variables involving the research problem:

1. social representations about the teaching profession;
2. assessment of the option for a teaching degree, including how satisfied they were with the choice made;
3. interest in actually being a teacher, including their intention of teaching, their plan for the period right after graduation, the time and level of teaching they intended to work in.

The research project was submitted to the Ethics Committee for the Research with Human Beings, at UFS, under protocol number 17/2012, and was approved by the mentioned body.

Collected data were treated statistically and had contents reviewed, according to Bardin (2010). SPSS (*Statistical Package for the Social Sciences*) was utilized to analyze quantitative data which was predominantly descriptive, but also included a test to compare the average values (Test t of *Student* for independent samples), whose purpose is to verify where the difference between the average figures of two groups of individuals is statistically significant. Qualitative data was clustered in categories according to the criterion of similarity in semantic contents (BARDIN, 2010).

Results and discussion

Representations about the profession

Upon being asked to express the idea that came to mind when participants heard the word “teacher”, the most frequent (69.4 percent) references were educator, citizen maker/trainer, learning mediator, master, a person who transmits knowledge; such expressions related to the function performed by that professional. Almost 20 percent of respondents mentioned positive qualities such as: a beautiful profession, people who are knowledgeable/intelligent, important, respectable, a hero, a warrior; and 11.8 percent pointed out negative qualities such as a sufferer, a difficult or ungrateful profession, a hard task, devaluation. Around 6 percent of them portrayed a teacher with aspects of the profession, including: classroom, children, a profession that requires reinforcement.

When assessing the relevance of a teacher to society at large, almost all participants (96.7 percent) gave the maximum worth in an increasing scale of importance from 0 through 5, and medium score was $M = 4.94$ ($SD = 0.35$).

Other teaching-related aspects were asked to be evaluated, in order to indicate the level of agreement (in an increasing scale from 0 through 4) with five favorable and five unfavorable statements about the profession. Results are shown in table 1.

Table 1 – Average values of agreement by participants with the statements about how they assessed the teaching profession.

Item	Statements*	Agreement average (Mean value from 0 to 4)	Std. Deviation
A	It will be easy for me to find a job as a teacher after my graduation	2,53	0,93
B	I think it will be very unlikely that I will have a fair pay as a teacher	2,39	1,21
C	I believe I will feel fulfilled personally for being a teacher	2,60	1,18
D	It is very hard to be a teacher	3,05	1,06
E	If my son/daughter were interested in becoming a teacher, I would encourage him/her to do so	2,64	1,13
F	A teacher is powerless to make the necessary changes in society	2,26	1,60
G	More and more I realize that teaching is my calling	2,54	1,11
H	Teaching is frustrating for whomever has a job like this	1,42	0,98
I	Teachers play a key role to foster social change in the country	3,52	0,79
J	The working environment of a teacher is potentially stressful	2,60	1,13

Note: The total number of participants (N) responding the items in the question ranged from 118 to 120.

*The statements correspond to the content of the evaluations related to the teaching profession.

Source: data prepared by authors

Considering the results exposed above, it can be noted that students acknowledge the teaching profession is socially devalued as well as how important a teacher is in making the necessary changes in society, although they also acknowledge that such professional play a fundamental role towards the social change in the country. This results is rather paradoxical and makes us assume that, as participants see it, there are factors that restrain the effects of the actions that a teacher can do in order to transform reality.

Analyzing the medium values of agreement/disagreement with the statements, one finds that, in general, undergraduates tend to agree with both types of statements, both favorable and unfavorable about the profession. Adding up the values given by participants to the items with positive (favorable) opinions, it can be seen that the average corresponds to 13.88 (SD= 3.14), and the maximum value possible is equal to 20 (total agreement with the statements in favor of the profession) and the minimum value is 0 (total disagreement with the positive statements). Doing the same procedure with the values participants gave to the items with negative (unfavorable) assessments, the average is 11.68 (SD= 3.56).

Comparing the average values, both tend to the agreement with the statements, which indicates that participants tended to agree both with the favorable and with the unfavorable aspects presented in the question. However, the level of agreement with favorable statements was slightly higher than the one for the unfavorable statements; this suggests that the representations of positive aspects of the teaching profession are a little more intense in group, compared to the negative aspects.

How the choice for the teaching-degree is assessed: satisfaction with the option

Investigating how satisfied respondents were with the choice of their training involved a measurement of such satisfaction in which participants were asked the following questions: "If you could go back in time and choose another educational degree, would you: a) choose the same teaching-degree you are currently taking; b) choose another teaching-degree; c) choose another degree not involving a teaching license". Options *b* and *c* were followed by a request to inform which degree they would choose.

Most (N = 75 or 62.5 percent) participants (120 respondents) said they would choose the same degree they had already chosen, in case they could go back in time regarding such decision. However, there was a remarkable number (N = 45 or 37.5 percent) of participants, corresponding to one third of the same, who said they would choose another educational degree, and 30 percent (N = 36) mentioned they would choose a non-teaching degree and only 7.5 percent (N = 9) claimed they would take another teaching-degree. Such results show that more than one third of participants were not fully satisfied at the choice they had made for Education, and out of those, most students was not satisfied at the option of taking a teaching-degree in some other field of knowledge.

Similar results were found in other studies about how satisfied teachers were with their profession. Gomes and collaborators (2006) discovered a high level of dissatisfaction towards the profession among Portuguese teachers and noted that over 25 percent of them would not opt to be a teacher if they had another opportunity of choosing another higher-education course. Gatti and collaborators (2011) found a drop in the demand for teaching-degree in the universities, highlighting the concern with the draining interest in the teaching career in case the current working conditions and payment of teachers remained the same.

Also in a UNESCO study (2004), involving a wide sample of Brazilian teachers, although most of them were satisfied at the profession, dissatisfaction was present as 36.6 percent said they were unhappy and less satisfied at the profession now than they were in their early career.

Comparing the results found in our study with those obtained by Bardagi; Boff (2010) with senior undergraduates from several areas, it can be noted that the percentage of participants who claimed to be little satisfied or dissatisfied at the choice of their degree was 27.2 percent, a figure lower than the one found in our study, related to the number of teaching-degree in Pedagogy who would opt for other educational

fields. According to Bardagi; Hutz (2010), dissatisfaction at the course among sophomore and senior undergraduates may happen due to a lesser idealization of the teacher career and more contact with the professional reality they are having contact with at that time.

It is noticeable that, despite the fact that the studies are different regarding the nature of participants and the methodologies utilized, there is evidence that teachers and teaching-degree students decrease their interest in teaching as they get involved with the profession or go through the next phases of their training, respectively. One may think that a negative perception of the context the teachers belong to, including salaries and working conditions, is the grounds for the dissatisfaction of a significant number of undergraduates with the choice they made for a teaching degree.

Concerning the responses given by participants that they would rather choose some other teaching-degree, the courses they mentioned were: psychology (N = 2), biology (N = 1), physical education (N = 1), physical therapy (N = 1), history (N = 1), literature (N = 1), and music (N = 1).

Participants who said they would choose another field of knowledge except a teaching-degree referred more often to the following courses as desirable: psychology (N = 9) and law (N = 7), and there also a double mention to either law or psychology (N = 1), followed by several other options less frequent in the responses such as business management (N = 3) and physical therapy (N = 3), engineering (N = 2) and computer science (N = 2), accounting, nursing, pharmacy, speech therapy, veterinary medicine, secretarial course, social work, tourism; the latter with a frequency of N = 1, and a human science course that was not specified (N = 1). This results indicate that there is a preference for the courses of psychology and law, which, together, correspond to 17 participants, equivalent to almost half of

the total amount of participants who would choose another branch of knowledge, except a teaching-degree.

Table 2 presents the frequency of the factors pointed by participants as the reason for a possible change in the choice of the college degree.

Table 2 – Frequencies and percentages of the response categories related to the reasons given for a change in the option for a college degree.

Reasons	Frequency	Valid Percent*
Social depreciation of teachers	23	53,5%
Non- satisfactory salaries	21	48,8%
Teacher's excessive workload	19	44,2%
Discovery of another vocation	9	20,9%
Frustration	4	9,3%
Difficulty to pass in the curricular disciplines	1	2,3%
Other factors	9	7,5%

Note: The question allowed to be responded with more than one choice.
 *Percentage related to the total number of respondents to that question (N = 43).
 Source: data prepared by the authors

It can be noted that the most frequently mentioned reasons for a change in the choice of the course were linked to a negative view of the teacher's social status (devaluation) and working conditions. In a secondary position, there appear the personal reasons and the negative opinion about the course or the performance of undergraduates in it. Such results are consistent with those found in the study by Tartuce et al. (2010), about the attractiveness of the teaching career for high-school students, and they also are highlighted in the studies of the dissatisfaction of teachers at the profession (GOMES et al., 2006; LÜDKE; BOING, 2004).

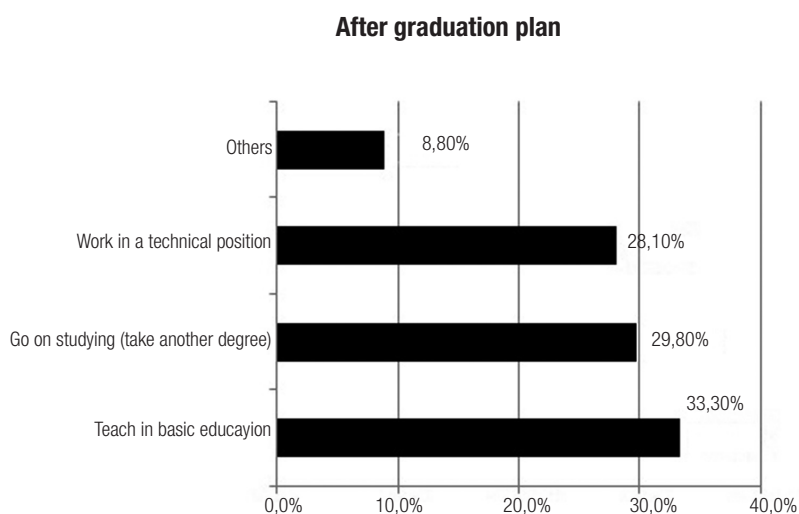
Interest in working as a teacher

When asked about what they planned to do right after they obtained the teaching-degree diploma, participants (N = 114) responded more frequently with the following plan options: teach in basic education school (33.3 percent); go on with the studies taking another course (29.8 percent) and taking a technical job (28.1 percent). As seen, there

was no concentration of responses in one single category. These results indicate that approximately one third of participants (33.3 percent) intend to work as a teacher right off of the activity of teaching, while most of them (57.9%) intended to work other fields rather than in teaching. A few (8.8 percent) referred other answers to the question, and four of them reported plans of teaching and studying simulateneously, and three mentioned the intention of sitting for exams of Public Tender to become a public servant, as can be seen in Chart 1.

Participants (N = 119), when asked if they intended to work as a classroom teacher, responded yes in the majority (N= 95 or 79.8 percent). In relation to the time they projected for teaching, it was found among those who said yes to the question that less than half (37 participants or 38.9 percent) said they intended to do so for period of over 10 years, 28 participants (29.4 percent) said they would work as a teacher for 6 to 10 years' time, and 26 (27.3 percent) for up to 5 years. These results show that more than a half of participants (56.7 percent) were willing

Chart 1 – Frequency of responses relate to participants’ plan for the period after graduation

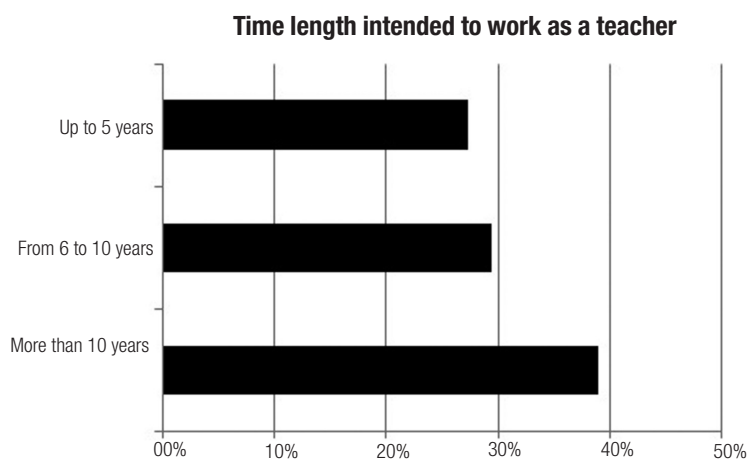


Source: Data prepared by the authors

to teach in a classroom for a maximum time of 10 years. This was evidence of a scarce interest in remaining in the profession in the long run.

Four participants (4.2 percent) did not mention for how long they intended to work as a teacher. Chart 2 illustrates these results.

Chart 2 – Frequency of responses about the time length intended to work as a teacher



Source: Data prepared by the authors

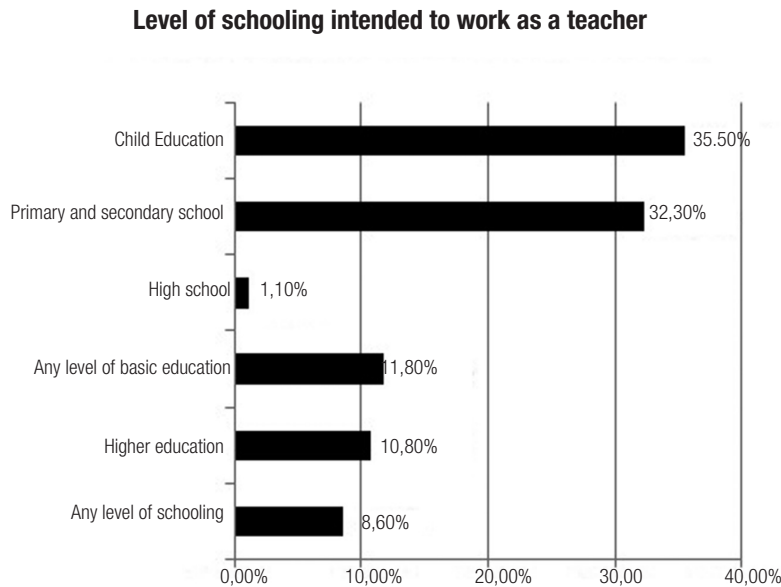
Regarding the level of schooling participants intended to teach at, most of them (35.5 percent and 32.3 percent) expressed an intention of taking Child Education and

Primary/Secondary School, respectively. Around 12 percent said they wanted to work at any level of Basic Education, while 10.8 percent would choose Higher Education; 8.6 percent would

accept any level of teaching and 1.1 percent would teach in a High-School. As can be seen, most participants intended to work as a teacher in Basic Education, especially in Child Education

and in the early grade of schooling, as it is expected in compliance with the purposes of and the license granted by the teaching-degree in Pedagogy. These results are presented in chart 3.

Chart 3 – Frequencies of responses about the level of schooling intended to work as a teacher.



Source: Data prepared by the authors

Relation between how the teaching profession is valued with the willingness to work as a teacher and how satisfied undergraduates are with the training of their choice

Our study achieved additional results when we compared the medium values of participants’ scores for the evaluation of aspects associated with the teaching profession to the responses participants gave about how satisfied they were with their training and to the intention of working as a teacher.

It was noted that the assessment of aspects related to the teaching profession (taken in its entirety, by adding up the values from the items presented in table 1), was in general more positive than among undergraduates who

intended to work as a teacher and among those who showed they were more satisfied about the degree they had chosen.

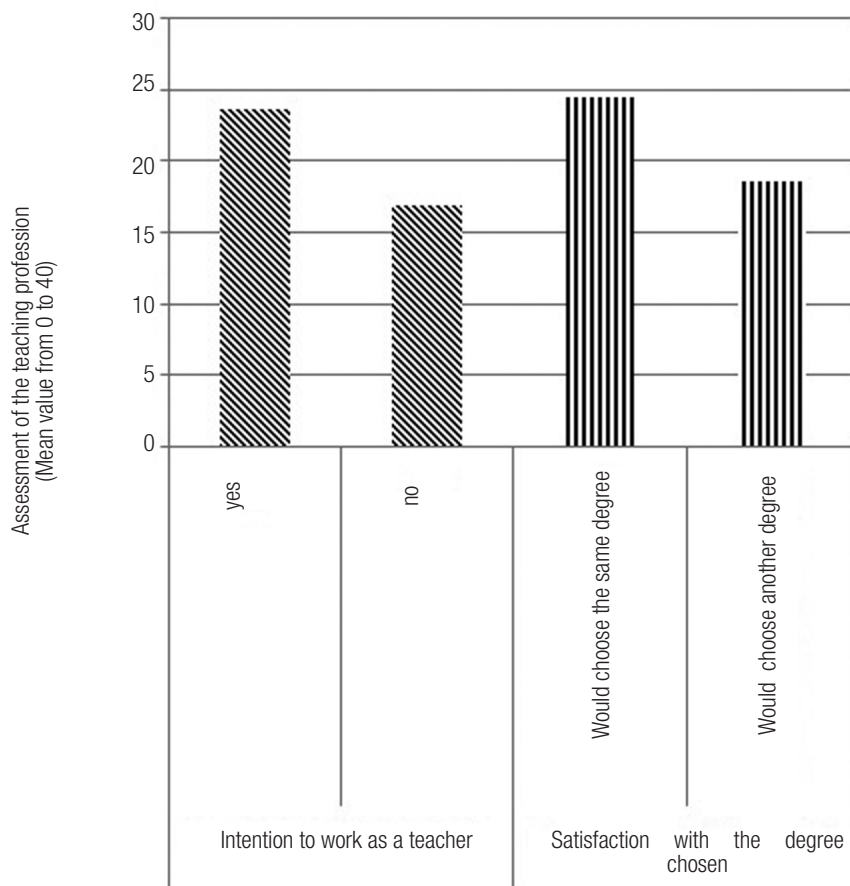
Through test T to compare the medium values ($t = 6.25$; $df = 112$), we found that there was a significant statistical difference ($P < 0.001$) in the evaluation average values about the teaching profession among participants who intended to be a teacher ($M = 23.55$; $SD = 4.43$) and those who were not willing to do so ($M = 16.91$; $SD = 4.99$); the former assessed the teaching profession more positively than the latter.

In relation to the undergraduates who showed more satisfaction with the degree they had chosen, that is, those mentioning they would not change to another higher-education degree, significant statistical differences were also observed regarding the evaluation of the same aspects of the teaching profession ($t = 6.66$; df

= 112; $P < 0.001$). It was seen that participants who would keep the same choice of degree had a higher medium value ($M = 24.38$; $SD = 3.99$) when assessing the intended profession, if compared to participants who said they would rather choose another degree ($M = 18.62$; $SD = 5.16$).

The comparison described in the previous paragraphs is displayed in chart 4, which shows the variables “intention to work as a teacher” and “satisfaction with the degree chosen” according to the evaluation of the teaching profession.

Chart 4 – Comparison of medium values of assessment of the teaching profession (general level of being favorable / unfavorable to the profession) with the responses associated with the intention to be a teacher and satisfaction with the degree chosen.



Source: Data prepared by the authors

The aspects of the teaching profession in which significant differences were found in the assessment by participants according to the willingness or lack thereof to work as a teacher were: opportunity of a good pay ($t = 2.15$; $df = 117$; $P < 0.033$); personal achievement as a teacher ($t = 7.38$; $df = 116$; $P < 0.001$); easiness to work in the profession, that is, the perception

related to the level on which the profession may be exercised with no great difficulties or hardness ($t = 2.81$; $df = 116$; $P < 0.006$); vocation to be a teacher ($t = 8.0$; $df = 115$; $P < 0.001$); motivation to be a teacher, that is, the perception of the level on which working as a teacher is not frustrating ($t = 4.59$; $df = 116$; $P < 0.001$); and encourage a son or daughter to join

the profession, that is, assessment in favor of encouraging a son or a daughter to be a teacher ($t = 1.93$; $df = 117$; $P < 0.056$).

The aspects of the teaching profession in which there was significant difference in the assessment by participants that would choose the same degree (they would not change for another) and those that would rather opt for another degree (they would change their choice), were: opportunity of a good pay ($t = 3.3$; $df = 118$; $P < 0.001$); personal achievement as a teacher ($t = 5.83$; $df = 81.28$; $P < 0.001$); encouragement to a son or daughter join the profession – how favorable they were to encourage a son or daughter to become a teacher ($t = 4.32$; $df = 70.55$; $P < 0.001$); vocation to be a teacher ($t = 8.5$; $df = 116$; $P < 0.001$); motivation to be a teacher ($t = 3.25$; $df = 117$; $P < 0.001$); and the perception that the working environment is not nerve-racking ($t = 2.37$; $df = 118$; $P < 0.019$).

Final comments

According to Álvaro and Garrido (2006, p. 288), in Moscovici's perspective, "the attitudes associated with an object of the social reality are, anyway, the result of previous representations of this object". It can be noted that the assessment by the undergraduates of the teaching profession indicate social representations that are favorable towards some aspects, especially those connected with the contents of the work, and unfavorable to others, mainly associated with the context of the teaching profession.

Generally speaking, students consider the image of a teacher very important to society, although it is not socially valued, a factor that emerged from the research as one of the major reasons for dissatisfaction regarding their choice of the teaching degree in Education.

The social role of the teaching profession was a factor mentioned positively by students both in the evaluations of this profession and in their expectancies in relation to the future work

as a teacher, and it was included among the reasons that led students to choose a higher-education degree. We can deduce from these considerations that the appreciation of the social role of teachers by the undergraduates contributes to their interest in this profession.

Our study has also allowed us to realize that, although most students said they were willing to work as a teacher, the interest in doing so was diluted in relation to the levels of schooling they aimed at and also in relation to the plans for getting started in their career (what they were planning for right after graduation). In addition to the function of teaching, there were some who intended to work in a technical position in Education or to go on with their studies. Also, the number of students interested in teaching was spread according to the length of time they intended to remain in this job, and less than a half were willing to stay for more than 10 years in the classroom. This suggests that the interest in teaching tends to be temporary for these students.

Although the idea that the teacher plays an important social role contributes to increase the interest in or the admiration of the profession, it is necessary to point out that this sole aspect is not enough to draw students to this field of work, nor to the prospect of remaining in the career.

This study also made it possible to visualize the factors that increase the lack of interest in the teaching profession, which are mainly related to the working conditions and the context of social devaluation. This analysis may prove useful to devise policies of teacher education with a concern not only with the quality of the academic training but also to recover the social appreciation of this professional group. Thus, the research findings point to the need to improve the working conditions of teachers in order to attract and retain students to the teaching career.

More than 10 years after the National Education Plan (PNE 2001-2011) set forth guidelines, objectives and goals to increase

the value of both teaching and teachers that should be achieved within a decade (BRASIL, 2001), it is noticeable that there is still a lot to be done so that it becomes an attractive professional field, whose image is that of socially valued profession. The new PNE, passed by Act No. 13,005 of 25 June 2014 to be in force for 10 years, defines again as one of this guidelines to increase the value of education workers, and two goals can be seen as aimed at such purpose: make it equal, within 6 years, the average income of teachers working in the public schools of basic education to the other professionals with an equivalent diploma – goal 17; and establish, in two years' time, career plans for workers of basic and higher education, and the reference, in the case of basic schooling, is the national wage level – goal 18 (BRASIL, 2014). Such guideline is a sign that the

expectancy of a change in the scenario of the teaching profession still remains, as this is a demand that has been noticed for a long time and not only by the workers in this trade, as the studies of teachers' representations of their career have shown, but also by those who in theory are getting ready to join it (or not), as we have analyzed in our research.

It is important to highlight that this study cannot have its findings generalized to other universities, as well as to other teaching degrees, considering the limitations of the sample size. Even if the results cannot be transposed to other contexts, there is a similarity with the outcome of other studies we have reviewed, conducted both in Brazil and in other countries. Due to the relevance of this subject, more research should be done to investigate the interest in the teaching career by undergraduates from other teaching degree courses.

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