

Presentation Note

Education, Work and Professional Identities

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Education, Work and Professional Identities has been one of the research lines recently developed in the Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences of the University of Lisbon, which has most contributed to knowledge production in the field of Adult Education.

According to Dubar (1991), through the transmission of knowledge, norms, values and attitudes, Education contributes to the construction of claimed professional identity. However, a double transaction between a professional self-identity and a professional identity towards the other only occurs in confront with the labour market. Hence, professional identity is the result of biographic and relational processes, an objective transaction between an attributed identity and a proposed one.

However, changes in the labour market and social policies have led individuals and professional groups to face increasingly complex processes of identity negotiation and re-negotiation. Higher education diversification and the upgrading of some courses to licenciatura degrees have given rise to the emergency of new professional groups who involve themselves in processes of professionalization as a way to claim for the recognition of their “expertise” (Freidson, 1994) in a process of inter-professional competition (Abbott, 1992). However, changes made to higher education are also in the origin of the emergency of processes of identity re-negotiation in labour contexts. On the other hand, as argued by Dubar (2000), growing precariousness, public employment contraction, and the dissemination of

new patterns of work organization and forms of work have also contributed to the increasing complexity of professional identity-building if not to its crisis.

Sísifo's sixth issue includes a thematic dossier where the study object of most articles has to do with the professionalization and professional identity of four distinctive professional groups having identity reconfiguration processes as their common denominator. The first article by Luísa d’Espiney focuses on the preliminary results of a survey on nurses’ identity-building processes, particularly those belonging to teams dealing with continuous health care and community intervention programmes. This author argues that changes occurring in the fields of Health Policies and Health Service structure contribute to the diversification of such processes. Professional identity leaning on the meanings offered by Medicine and hospital institutions tends nowadays to be replaced by another identity-building process which is based on the diversification of health caretaking, where user-centred work emerges as a significant reference for a concept of nursing as a caretaking profession. On the other hand, regarding nursing as auxiliary to the physicians’ activity leads them to accept the status of “mini-physicians”, which does not grant more autonomy but offers higher social recognition. The second article authored by Isabel Passarinho is an exploratory study on social assistants. Such as in the case of nursing, at stake is a professional group also involved in a process of professional reconfiguration and whose history has so far been rooted in the

hegemony of practice-driven knowledge. Social assistants are also trying new identity-building models based on the construction of a corpus of specific theoretical knowledge, on getting closer to Social Sciences, on a growing functional specialization, and on the privatization of social service, as a way to claim for a higher professional status and to re-negotiate a new attributed identity, liable to wipe off the stigma of a social assistant as a mediator of conformist thought. The article signed by David Tavares is based on the outcomes of a survey carried out in the context of his doctoral studies which deals with the influence of school and work contexts on the construction and transformation of the professional identity of cardiopneumology technicians. According to this author, school strongly influences their identity-building process, not particularly as a socializing institution (as in the case of physicians or nurses) but rather for the influence exerted on their professionalizing project and process by teaching guidelines affecting the re-composition both of professional knowledge and of the role to be played in the institutionalization and legitimacy of this socio-professional group. António José Almeida signs the last article in this group. He discusses professionalization in the field of human resource management and in the context of a heavy historical heritage characterized by the legitimacy of dominant interests, which stems from the instrumental role this sector has been playing in the control and ideological conformation to the goals of Capital. This author also provides a sociographic characterization of professionals linked to this field, which is marked by exponential growth and a high feminization rate.

Alda Bernardes' article focuses on the outcomes of an exploratory study on training policies and practices in big firms operating in Portugal. According to this author, the different logics underlying these firms' training programmes do not only affect the volume and investment in training, but they also influence training models, goals and objectives. To help us understand this reality and characterize different

policies and practices, this author provides a typology consisting of three training models: Traditional and Utilitarian Training, Strategic Training Geared towards Problem-Solving and Training Geared towards Personal and Social Development.

This thematic dossier also includes the contribution of some Brazilian researchers. Maria Cristina Martins describes the results of a survey conducted among women who work as crab peelers and discusses the opposition between legitimate and illegitimate knowledge in the context of an environmental accident. This author analyses the extent to which power relations contribute to silence and dequalify traditional practice-driven knowledge produced by crab peelers about ecological issues and particularly about the preservation of local ecosystems. Veleida Anahí da Silva and Ana M. F. Teixeira report the outcomes of a survey on University students from popular classes enrolled in the Federal University of Sergipe and participating in a programme targeted to identify their knowledge acquisitions and their difficulties in a perspective to overcome a dichotomy between scientific and professional knowledge. They also share with us three different types of life trajectories, which they describe as having guided these students' lives.

This thematic dossier ends with a critical recension of David Tavares' book, *School and professional identity: the case of cardiopneumology technicians*, which was prepared by Wilson Correia de Abreu.

Sísifo's sixth issue also includes the unedited text of Albano Estrela's conference held in the Lisbon Academy of Sciences, in 2007, in a ceremony in honour of the pedagogue Delfim Santos during his birth centenary celebration. Finally, this issue closes with an article signed by two Spanish authors, Joan Josep Solaz-Portolés and Vicente Sanjosé López, who provide a review of literature on the types of knowledge involved in problem-solving, discuss the extent to which these knowledge acquisitions affect performance and share some guidelines targeted to improve the problem-solving teaching activity.

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