

Professional development and a career in teaching — career phases, curriculum and supervision

JOSÉ ALBERTO GONÇALVES

jagoncal@ualg.pt

University of Algarve

ABSTRACT:

The central concept in this paper is that a career in professional teaching is one in which experience is constructed both relationally and contextually, and in which the person-teacher develops diachronically across a series of stages or phases each with their own characteristics, in discrete spaces and times, and with training needs specific to each.

In the ongoing process which is “becoming a teacher”, every trainee, when confronted with the challenges and requirements of society, school, pupils, families and communities, performs a multiplicity of functions. S/he acts as a builder and manager of the curriculum, and as a facilitator — supervising the teaching practices deployed in the early stages of training, the success of which largely determines the person and the teacher that each trainee becomes. This means, if we are to investigate and better understand these practices, we have to locate them at their precise points on the career trajectory, with the characteristics and requirements specific to each.

KEYWORDS:

Career stages, Teacher Education, Curriculum, Supervision.

INTRODUCTION

It's generally accepted nowadays that lifelong training is a necessary response to a never-ending need for innovation and change, and at the same time a prior condition for the personal and professional development of teachers.

What we have to do, therefore, is try to understand how teachers undergo the process of “becoming a teacher” over the course of their careers. In this way we can identify the teacher education solutions best suited to the specific characteristics of each stage in the teacher's development as person/professional, in view of the different socio-educational contexts active in each case.

This has been an ongoing preoccupation both in my work as a teacher trainer and as a researcher, namely in the studies which formed the material for my master's dissertation (Gonçalves, 1990) and doctoral thesis (Gonçalves, 2000), as well as dissertations and theses for which I have had occasion to act as orientator, and whose lines of investigation have examined either specific dimensions of teaching or the early training experiences of facilitators and future teachers.

This paper takes as its starting point a “standard” career itinerary, and via the examination of two mutually dependent fields in training — curriculum and supervision — I shall attempt to broach a wider reflection in some of the findings presented in two masters' dissertations in which I acted as an orientator (Gaspar, 2003; Severino, 2004¹), after the necessary conceptual contextualization.

THE TEACHING CAREER AS A PROCESS OF DEVELOPMENT AND ONGOING TRAINING

A career in teaching is a process of ongoing personal and professional development by the adult-teacher, and includes not just the knowledge and skills which the teacher constructs during training, but also the person s/he is, with all his/her beliefs, idiosyncrasies and “track record”, and the context in which s/he works as a teacher (Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992).

Given the above, the development of the teacher has to be compatible with the (organizational) development of the school, a process which according to Day (1999) must observe six principles: i) the development of the teacher is continuous, taking place over the course of his/her professional life; ii) it should be self-managed, yet remain the joint responsibility of teacher and school; iii) it should receive the material and human resources necessary for its accomplishment; iv) it should respond to the interests of the teacher and of the school, although not necessarily simultaneously; v) it should have credibility as a process; and vi) it should be differentiated, according to the needs of the teachers and the stage of their professional development.

There are many different ways to be a teacher. Throughout the teacher's career there operates a process of evolution in which discrete points can be identified, each different in terms of attitude, sentiment and commitment with regard to the practice of education, and deriving from the way the trainee

teacher perceives his/her relationship with peers and pupils, the way s/he practises education, and the education system in general (Gonçalves, 1990; Gonçalves & Simões, 1991).

In short, we might say that every teacher is what s/he is as a result of an idiosyncratic and autobiographic process of personal and professional development which, based as it is on the trainee's personality and personal characteristics, realizes itself via a transitional dynamic to which there contribute factors of a personal and socio-professional nature including the working environment, characteristics specific to the profession (Glickman, 1985), historical and organizational contexts, and the cultures in which teachers work — as well as the stages in their own cognitive and emotional development (Day, 1999; Hargreaves, 1998).

The theoretical and methodological premises which underpin research on the professional lives and careers of teachers are numerous, however, as the classification devised by Nóvoa (1992) shows.

So, given that “the behaviour of teachers, and their development, can only be usefully understood when situated in the broader context of a personal life story and career” (Kelchtermans & Vandenberghe, 1994, p. 45), I opted in my research procedure, which essentially employed a linear treatment, to consider the concept of career as a succession of cycles in the professional life, as part of a theoretical and methodological approach to biography; with the work of Huberman (1989, *inter alia*) forming the conceptual basis for this research.

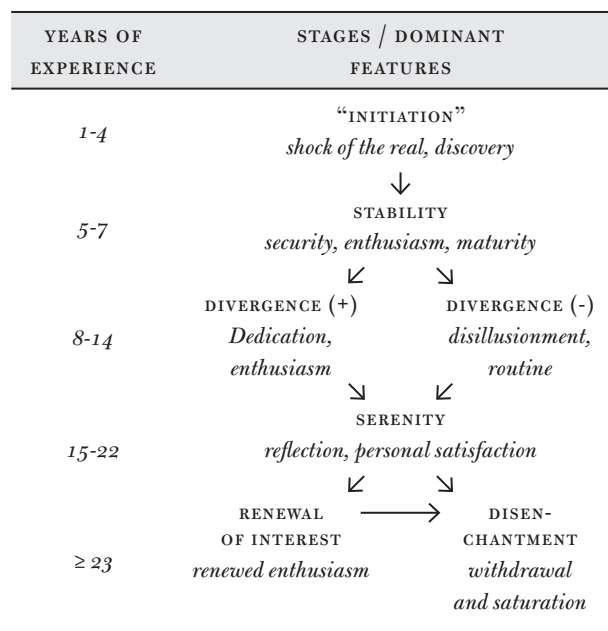
More specifically, I examined the professional trajectories of 42 primary school teachers in the district of Olhão, as they themselves remembered them, via semi-structured interviews on an autobiographical theme. My aim in these interviews was to i) identify the thematic and/or characteristic “features” of teachers' careers, generally understood, and to ii) pinpoint the “constants” in the professional experiences related to me in such a way that I could devise a “model” for career development, and identify the “features” which are unique to each “moment”, “phase” and “stage” in the career. A series of procedures, then, which enabled me to devise a “standard” career trajectory for teachers.

Six years later — taking into account the fact that a teacher over the course of his/her professional life

accumulates and reinterprets the experience which s/he acquires (Ball & Goodson, 1985), itself a process which leads the teacher to (re)define and modify his/her attitudes towards teaching, students and the education process in general in the light of the context in which s/he finds himself or herself, reworking and resizing his/her professional perspectives — I re-interviewed the same teachers using identical methods.

Examining my findings, I could trace across time their professional trajectories and also, via a series of comparisons and cross-comparisons, reconceptualize the “standard” career trajectory constructed earlier (Figure 1), comprising five phases, viz.:

FIGURE 1 — STAGES IN THE TEACHER'S CAREER



Source: Gonçalves, 2000, p. 438.

PHASE 1: “INITIATION”

This first phase, whose designation derives from the way interviewees described their induction into their profession, lasts into around the 4th year of professional service. This phase is characterized by an alternation between the struggle for “survival” which the “shock of the real” has triggered, and the enthusiasm felt in discovering the professional world, still somewhat idealized, which opens itself up to teachers at the beginning of their careers.

With teachers for whom the first of these aspects is the decisive one, the beginning of the professional trajectory is marked by a struggle between the will

to affirm oneself and the desire to abandon the profession: in which factors such as “lack of preparation” (real or perceived) for exercising the teaching profession, “difficult working conditions” and “not knowing how to get oneself accepted as a teacher” (due to inexperience) have significant weight.

Where the determining characteristics are enthusiasm and the sense of discovery, teachers experience “no difficulties” in their induction into their careers, given the conviction or sensation that they “feel prepared”, even if this initial “easiness” — as recalled by some interviewees — is no more than apparent or illusory.

PHASE 2: STABILITY

The second phase lasts from roughly the 5th to the 7th years of teaching, and in some cases may last into the 10th. It is characterized by a gaining of confidence associated with the teacher’s increased awareness that s/he “is capable” of managing the teaching-learning process, satisfaction with the work s/he has achieved and an enjoyment of teaching, on many occasions not previously felt.

This phase is marked by a “calming down” — in a manner relatively uniform for all teachers — regardless of whether the first phase was “easy” or “difficult”.

PHASE 3: DIVERGENCE

From roughly the 8th to the 14th year of service, “imbalance” becomes a dominant factor — the opinions of the interviewees diverge with regard to the previous phase, for the positive or for the negative, and regardless of how they experienced their early professional trajectory.

This “divergence” leads some teachers to continue investing in their careers with dedication and enthusiasm, to keep seeking fulfilment and recognition as professionals; others become alienated, alleging “tiredness” and “saturation”, and slide slowly into the mire of routine.

PHASE 4: SERENITY

The 4th phase occurs between the 15th and 25th year of the career, and is characterized (as its name suggests) by a pervasive sense of “calm”: not the result of a loss of enthusiasm in the previous phase, but rather the consequence of a more emotionally detached

perspective and a greater ability to reflect and weigh things up. This state is determined both by a process of “re-interiorization” and by experience.

The dominant feeling in this phase is personal satisfaction in knowing “what one is doing”, and in the conviction that “one is doing it well”, a feeling often associated with a certain conservatism.

PHASE 5: RENEWAL OF INTEREST AND DISENCHANTMENT

As teachers near the end of their careers, i.e. after approximately 23-31 years of service, their professional trajectories may once again diverge. Most interviewees exhibited fatigue, saturation and impatience as they waited for retirement; some, in the words of one interviewee, no longer even felt “capable of hearing and putting up with the children”. Others — in far smaller numbers — appeared to have “reinvested” in the profession, revealing a renewed interest and enthusiasm, a desire to “continue learning new things”. Note too that while some of the latter group ended up “drifting” into disenchantment, there was no comparable drift in the opposite direction among the former group.

It remains for me to point out that since professional trajectories are experienced personally and are constructed socially, with factors of a random nature often exerting a determining influence on them, the development of a career in teaching cannot be viewed in a deterministic sense, if only because of the flexibility it admits in terms of the “temporal” confines of stages and phases, wherever the structure of the career and/or certain of its conditioning factors change.

PERSPECTIVES ON THE CURRICULUM THROUGHOUT THE TEACHING CAREER

Since the way teachers think and act changes over the different phases and stages in their careers, with “continuous training” and the knowledge they have gained through experience, built over time as a result of educational practice and work with peers acting to influence the way they think and act, it’s only logical that teachers will view, and manage, the curriculum in different ways as their careers evolve.

This was the central theme of the study by Gaspar (2003) which I oriented, and whose principal objectives were: to identify and characterize perspectives on the curriculum among 15 primary school teachers in the district of Mértola; and to understand the influence of their professional trajectories on the construction of these perspectives via their cross-comparative reading with the characteristics of their professional trajectories, taking as a point of reference the “typical” career evolution described earlier.

In conceptual terms, this study understands the curriculum to designate “a critical field of acquisition of basic knowledge and learning skills (...) which make viable realistic training processes throughout life” (Roldão, 1999a, p. 17) and, at the same time, an integrated cultural and training project which “underpins, articulates and orients all educational activities and experiences occurring in the school, endowing them with sense and intentionality and integrating a whole set of different interventions in a single project” (Alonso, 1996, p. 11).

Viewed as a “project”, the curriculum implies the taking of decisions on the various levels, in the various contexts and practices, required at different moments (conception, development and evaluation), at a given time and in a given space, and requiring different options from three essential spheres: which curricular model should be adopted, the internal organization of the curriculum, and the role played by the teachers (Pacheco & Paraskeva, 2000).

If this is so, the school has to adapt and define the curricular instruments which consubstantiate the orientations defined at national level, delineated as part of the educational policy which is followed, with the teacher responsible for adapting these instruments to the individual requirements of classes and students.

This leads us, then, into the field of curricular development. On this subject Roldão (1999b, p. 38) observes that curricular development is a “process of curricular decision-making and management, which involves constructing and underpinning proposals, taking decisions, evaluating results, recasting and adapting processes — at the level of school and of teachers”.

Teachers therefore take on the role of curricular builders and managers — one which incidentally

has much to do with their professional development process, insofar as their personal conceptions of this role depend on the values they cherish and their practical skills. And these vary in accordance with their maturity and their professional experience (Brazão, 1996).

In terms of results, the study yielded not only information on the general curricular perspectives of the 15 teachers (3 for each of the 5 stages in the “standard” trajectory), but also the evolution of these perspectives over the course of the teachers’ careers — the dimension with which we are specifically concerned here.

In my global and transversal analysis of the data gathered from semi-structured interviews of a retrospective nature, I shall for the moment mention only the most significant aspects in the evolution of the curricular perspectives of teachers over the course of their careers, taking as points of reference the four categories which emerged during analysis of the content of the interviews: “start of career”, “present moment”, “moments viewed as turning points in teachers’ practices” and “professional expectations for the future”.

With regard to the first category, all interviewees responded — especially those in the fourth and fifth stages of their careers (serenity and renewal of interest / disenchantment), perhaps as a result of the greater distance of time since the beginning of their professional careers. The most frequent assertions in percentual terms were: “I used textbooks a lot”, — a clear articulation of the traditional curriculum=textbook association — and “I was less creative”, which doubtless points to an even lower degree of competence in the management and implementation of curricular principles and contents. Also worth mentioning are “I only thought about what I had to teach”, which suggests a task-centred attitude, and is indicative of inexperience and limited practical aptitude; and “I worked more on my own initiative”, signifying a retreat into the self symptomatic of insecurity and an “untamed” individualism in teaching.

The “present moment” category includes both positive and negative outlooks. The former, which are significantly more prominent in number, are principally to be found among interviewees who find themselves at the stage in which their careers

diverge either towards a renewal of interest or disenchantment, perhaps due to certain characteristic features which they have in common. Curiously, teachers at the “serenity” phase gave no views on this subject. The most expressive comments in this subcategory are: “I like what I do”, “I have a lot of enthusiasm” and “I have more experience”: all of which denote a definitive self-acceptance as professionals and a fully-fledged competence in the management of the educational process in its many different dimensions.

As for the negative outlooks, these are almost exclusively found among interviewees in the first phase of their career, and are mainly expressed in references to “anxiety”, “indecision”, “tiredness” and “lack of experience”, sentiments and/or attitudes which are perfectly understandable among those just setting out in their profession.

Moving on to the third category — “moments viewed as turning points in teachers’ practices” — the sentiment most in evidence in the discourse of all interviewees was “I’ve been changing”, which conveys their awareness of their evolution as teachers. More specifically, they identify as key moments of change on the curricular level the appearance of the “School Area” model, changes in programmes, and the introduction/alteration of the “school management” model. Without denying the importance of these aspects, their prevalence in the comments of the interviewees in fact reveals that teachers’ curricular practices change more by external fiat than by a natural process of development which is intrinsic to the operation of the school as a teaching institution, or by self-reflection on teaching practice.

We should also notice with regard to this category the subcategory of “aspects which have changed in teachers’ practices”. Comments on this, in terms of frequency and curricular significance, include: “reduction in the importance of the textbook” (found in interviewees at all stages of their careers except, obviously, the first), “valorization with colleagues/community” and “valorization of the experience of the students” (present in the discourse of teachers from the final three career stages) and “valorization of the participation of students in the learning process”, according to the comments of those belonging to the phases of stability, divergence and renewal of interest / disenchantment. All these indicators point

to the teachers’ lessened focus on themselves and their task, greater openness to cooperative work, and increased attention to the learning conditions and problems faced by students, the result not only of a greater mastery of the educating art (to which contribute a deeper comprehensive interpretation of curricular principles, concepts and orientations and an increased capacity to implement them and make them operational, construed diachronically) but also the “discovery” of the meaning and importance of inter-peer training.

Finally, there is the “professional expectations for the future” category. Here the most significant indicators are: “I want to learn more” and “I’d like to remain enthusiastic”, comments which respectively express a sense that to be a teacher is to be involved in a process of continuous construction, and professional satisfaction and/or fulfilment.

Analysis of all this data according to the different career phases therefore points to the following aspects in the evolution of perspectives on the curriculum among our interviewees:

- The first phase of the teaching career is principally characterized by an acknowledgement of a lesser participation in the development of the curriculum, something from which the importance attached to textbooks is not wholly removed, and a lesser “concern” for students, attitudes which moreover are congruent with the characteristics of this phase in the professional trajectory, which is characterized by a focussing on persons and/or content; it’s also at this phase that least importance is attached to joint work with local initiatives/authorities/bodies;
- In the first three phases of a teacher’s career (initiation, stability and divergence) more importance is attached to the group work of students, perhaps a symptom of the changes in teacher education since the 1974 watershed;
- The last three phases in the professional trajectory are those in which most importance is attached to “work with one’s colleagues” in terms of learning and training;
- The divergence and serenity phases are those in which interviewees showed most protagonism with regard to the development of the

curriculum — perhaps a result of the experience they have accumulated, the enthusiasm typical of the first phase, when experienced in a positive way, or the reflexive detachment that the second embodies;

- The importance attached to students increases over the course of the career, with interviewees considering students, in the final two phases especially, “partners in the educational process”; it’s also in these last two phases that interviewees denoted a greater tendency to consider parents too as partners in the education of their students, and exhibited greater protagonism regarding the other local educational agents with which the school pursued projects;
- In the last three phases of the professional trajectory, and above all in the “serenity” and renewal of interest / disenchantment phases, interviewees revealed a greater capacity of reflection and sense of change, something which is surely related to a certain emotional detachment and critical sensibility with regard to their experiences, fuelled by the phenomenon of socio-psychological (re)interiorization which begins at this moment to take form.

SUPERVISION AND PHASES IN THE TEACHING CAREER

Turning now to initial training and, more specifically, to the supervision of teaching practice, Severino (2007) conducted under my guidance a study whose principal objectives were: i) to identify and characterize the supervisory styles of teachers attending the nursery teacher education course at the Escola Superior de Educação in the Universidade do Algarve and ii) to find out how supervisory styles are influenced by the development of teachers’ careers.

This study sets out from the assumption that teaching practice, and the initiation into professional activity and respective supervision, are essential components in the teacher’s training process. It views the former as a component in training, whose explicit purpose is the initiation of future educators/teachers in the real teaching world, allowing them to develop the skills they need to perform in an

adequate and responsible manner (Formosinho, 2001). The second is a question of “synergic supervision”, as conceptualized by Janosik and Creamer (2003), for whom it is a process which acknowledges the developmental needs of trainees and the goals of educational organizations, in a dual relationship where supervisor and supervised must learn to make their energies and efforts concur, and engage in a bilateral dialogue focussed on the skills and goals necessary for the interpersonal and constructive development of all those involved.

In initial training, the supervisor (the training college supervisor as well as the cooperating educator / teacher, i.e. s/he in whose class the trainee accomplishes his/her teaching practice) has to act as a mediator between the supervisee and his/her training environment, pointing out potentially relevant facts on the basis of which the trainee can build new meanings (Garmston *et al.*, 2002). To do this, and to give a material expression to the supervisory process, the supervisor has to create situations which generate truly educational interaction, favouring “communication, negotiation, argumentation and strategic action between the interlocutors” (Vieira, 1995, p. 56).

Given this, and without disrespect to its scientific and pedagogical-didactic dimensions, supervision has to be seen as a humanist, developmentalist process, of an essentially relational nature, whose essence lies in the establishing of relations which facilitate the development of future educators / teachers, based on attitudes of assistance, availability, authenticity, encouragement and empathy on the part of the supervisors, who in the last analysis are factors in the growth and learning of the trainees (Gonçalves, 1998).

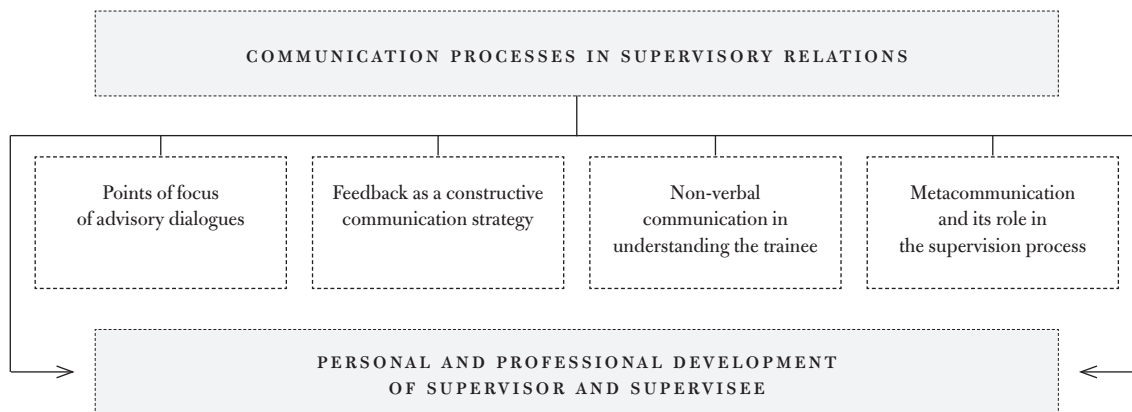
It follows that if authentic communication — collaboration, comprehension and encouragement — is to take place, the supervisor must possess a vast range of skills, which Glickman (1985) calls “interpersonal skills”, and which Acheson and Gall (1993) consider to find their expression in the following communicative behaviour: i) listening first, talking later; ii) accepting and using the ideas of trainees; iii) asking questions for purposes of clarification; and iv) congratulating trainees on their achievements.

These are the behaviours which underpin interactive communication, which finds expression

in four processes: the advisory dialogue and its points of emphasis; feedback as a constructive strategy in communication; non-verbal communication as a factor in understanding the trainee; and its

role in the supervision process, as synthesized by Gonçalves and Gonçalves (2002) and represented in Figure 2.

FIGURE 2
COMMUNICATION PROCESSES IN SUPERVISORY RELATIONS



Source: Gonçalves and Gonçalves, 2002, p. 498.

We can now summarize each of these communication processes:

- a) The *advisory dialogue* must be collaborative, open, frank and empathetic, framed in such a way as to help the trainee develop the ability to reflect on his/her practice, relate theoretical knowledge with situations experienced, and construct a personal style of conduct.
- b) *Feedback*, as a constructive strategy in communication, must be objective, descriptive, constructive, instructive and not just critical, emphasizing the positive aspects of the trainee's action, and helping him/her to take decisions on future action.
- c) *Non-verbal communication* as a factor in understanding the trainee allows the supervisor to interpret the non-verbal messages emitted by the supervisee to help him/her overcome doubts, anxieties and concerns which s/he does not manifest verbally, due to inhibition or the fear of being misunderstood.
- d) *Metacommunication* signifies the relation of comprehension, on a higher level, between the digital communication code (the "content" or verbal messages) and the respective analogue code (non-verbal forms of communication).

In reality, the supervisor must first and foremost be an expert in human relations, capable of generating a dialectical communication which involves *knowing how to listen* and *wanting to understand* as means to promoting the development of trainees. According to Glickman (1985), three prerequisites must be present in the action of the supervisor: knowledge, interpersonal skills, and technical skills; all of which shape and find expression in their mode of action, embodying the respective style of supervision.

Conceptualizations of supervision styles differ. Severino (2007) adopts the model of Zahorik (1988), which is schematically represented in Figure 3.

Summarily, then, there are three styles of supervision:

- i. *Prescriptive*: the supervisor conducts active supervision, concerning him/herself, fundamentally, with the behaviour cultivated by the students, i.e. s/he accords greater importance to technical competence, which is primarily expressed in the development of instructional skills and techniques for managing groups/classes. This teacher is also particularly attentive to the quantity and the solidity of the knowledge of the trainee (the academic), prescribes behaviour, presents him/herself as a specialist and a model (the master), gives

FIGURE 3
STYLES OF SUPERVISION

SUPERVISOR STYLE	TYPE OF SUPERVISION	VALUES	TYPES OF SUPERVISOR
Prescriptive	Active supervision	Cultivation of conduct	· <i>academic</i> · <i>master</i> · <i>mentor</i> · <i>critic</i>
Interpretative	Active supervision	Ideas	· <i>humanist</i> · <i>reformulator</i>
Supportive	Reactive supervision	The person	· <i>therapist</i> · <i>defender</i> · <i>researcher</i>

Source: Severino, 2007, p. 58.

advice as a tutor while not relinquishing his/her authority (the mentor) and enumerates, analyzes and interprets the conduct of his/her supervisees, proposing and supporting actions which the trainees should take into account (the critic);

ii. *Interpretative*: the supervisor adopts an active approach and attaches more importance to his/her own ideas than the points of view of his/her trainees, although s/he does make them gain awareness of what is happening in the classroom, by questioning their practice and suggesting processes that might lead to change (the humanist), and emphasizing those actions which they should implement, prescribing and exemplifying behaviours (the reformulator);

iii. *Supportive*: the trainer deploys a reactive supervision, attaching importance to the person, which leads him/her to analyze and accept the thoughts and actions of supervisees. Accordingly, s/he shows affection, empathy, and encouragement, centring him/herself on the trainee and helping him/her to project his/her plan of action (the therapist), acting as a mediator and cooperating with the supervisee, whom s/he urges to take responsible decisions, eliminating or reducing the difficulties facing the supervisee in the classroom or school (the defender), taking on the role of questioner, seeking to learn in detail the teaching practices of supervisee, evaluating his/her efficiency

and selecting avenues of future action (the researcher).

It was using this model as a reference that the author of the study, in accordance with the first of the two objectives expressed above and using the questionnaire format, identified and characterized the supervisory styles of 15 teachers attending the 4th year of the introductory training course for nursery school teachers at the Universidade do Algarve. After this, and using successive configuration, she selected the four “cases” considered to be the most representative of the identified supervision styles, based on their position on the “standard” career stage as per our model, with a view to approaching the second objective expressed above (those of Ana, a “supportive” teacher in the stability phase, Joana and Inês, both in the divergence phase, the first of a prescriptive nature and the second of an interpretative, and finally Matilde, prescriptive, in the serenity phase).

Now, since no “pure” supervision style exists — all teachers, regardless of their personal, professional and training experience, exhibit traits belonging to one or more styles, though one is always predominant — we might expect that the teacher, following the natural flow of his/her career and with the increasing maturity, mastery and experience acquired over time that this brings to supervision, would move from the prescriptive style to the interpretative, and from here to the supportive. If this were so, we would have a progressive loss of focus on the person and an increased awareness of

helping, accompanying, encouraging and empathizing with trainees over the course of their careers.

Yet on an interpretative analysis of the data from the four cases, taken from semi-direct interviews, these expectations are neither confirmed nor refuted, as the following profiles illustrate:

Supervisor: Ana

A teacher in the stability phase (6 years' service). She has, therefore, little professional experience and exhibits a supportive style, which suggests a capacity for analysis, reflection and openness which is not often found at this relatively early stage of the teacher's career.

Supervisor: Joana

In the divergence stage, on the positive side (9 years of teaching), exhibits characteristics typical of the prescriptive style, although tending significantly towards the supportive and away from the interpretative, as we might "logically" expect from a linear process of evolution. This circumstance may perhaps be related to a perceived attainment of stability which is now threatened by "divergence", which opens the way to a diversity of points of view, aspirations and activities.

Supervisor: Inês

At the divergence phase (14 years as a teacher), now tending towards the negative, exhibits a supportive style, although with an admittedly limited tendency towards the interpretative. If the data is correct, this case may represent the expression of an acute critical sense, which simultaneously but antithetically leads both to a humanist vision of supervision and to disenchantment with the profession.

Supervisor: Matilde

At the serenity stage (20 years' service), according to our study hypothesis this teacher should exhibit supportive characteristics, but in fact shows herself to take a prescriptive view of things, although with certain supportive features.

To conclude, this study was of an exploratory nature but nevertheless allows us to affirm that the supervisory styles of its protagonists depend more on their personal characteristics than on the phase of career at which they find themselves — although closer examination of the data does yield clear indications of an interpenetration of factors and circumstances which point towards a certain "complementarity" between the two fields.

CONCLUSIONS

The "standard" career trajectory which the author has traced in this paper must not be viewed as something inevitable, but instead as a "development in tendencies", which helps not only to systemize the different moments and circumstances which give form and legibility (investigative and interpretative) to the careers of teachers, but also to better understand real training needs, in the various fields of educational action, and more especially in teachers' roles as curricular managers and trainers (supervisors).

If person and professional are intrinsically one, we must naturally accept that the person / teacher is contextually and at each moment of his/her experience an idiosyncratic fusion of person and teacher, with his/her personality, skills, competences, beliefs, attitudes and experiences, all of which have a decisive influence on his/her position in society, in teaching and in relationships with others — namely students, peers and community.

And so, through a brief synthesis of the findings of two empirical studies — albeit of an exploratory nature — we can establish a certain "evolutionary" parallel between the different stages of the careers (understood generically) and the perspectives and curricular action of teachers on the one side; and on the other, although merely in an outlined form, the exercise of the function of supervisor in the initial training of nursery school teachers, a process in which personal characteristics, and relationship skills in particular, play a decisive role.

ENDNOTES

1. Published in 2007. *Vide* bibliographical references.

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