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## Constitution of teacher identities in Pibid activities

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#### **Abstract**

The Institutional Scholarship Program for Teaching Initiation (Pibid) is a Brazilian government initiative through its Ministry of Education (MEC) promoted by the Higher Education Personnel Improvement Coordination (Capes). It has been considered by the academic community as relevant to teacher training courses for Basic Education (EB) to promote the inclusion of students in undergraduate programs at public schools' activities since their first years in college. This paper aims to reflect on the importance of Pibid Chemistry/ Uneb for the establishment of Teaching Initiation Fellows (IDs) teachers' identities from the exercise of understanding discourses of social actors involved in the process by the use of qualitative approach. Theoretical references about the Brazilian educational panorama are presented with respect to undergraduate courses, partircularly Chemistry, and the establishment of teachers' identities. It concludes that during the activities the IDs assumed distinct identity forms: monitors, Basic Education teachers, researchers and reflective teachers.

#### **Keywords**

Teacher training; teachers' identities; basic education; Pibid.

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# Constitución de las identidades docentes en actividades del Pibid

### Resumen

El Programa Institucional de Beca de Iniciación a la Enseñanza (Pibid) es una iniciativa del gobierno brasileño a través de su Ministerio de Educación (MEC) promovido por la Coordinación de Mejora de Personal de Educación Superior (Capes). Se ha considerado por la comunidad académica como relevante para los cursos de formación del profesorado para la Educación Básica (EB) por promover la inclusión de estudiantes en programas que involucran su relación con las escuelas públicas desde el principio de su grado. Este trabajo tiene como objetivo reflexionar sobre la importancia del programa Pibid - Química / Uneb para el establecimiento de las diferentes identidades de maestro presentadas por los estudiantes que participan del programa de Iniciación a la Enseñanza (IDs). De esta forma, intentaremos comprender los discursos de los actores sociales involucrados en el proceso mediante el uso del enfoque cualitativo. Estudios teóricos sobre el panorama educativo brasileño son presentados con respecto a los cursos de graduación, en particular el de Química, además de referencias sobre el establecimiento de las identidades de los maestros. Se concluyó que durante las actividades del programa, los IDs presentan distintas formas de identidad: monitores, maestros de la educación básica, investigadores y profesores reflexivos.

#### Palabras clave

La formación del profesorado; identidades de los profesores; educacion basica; Pibid.

#### Introduction

From Brazilian Education Law Guidelines and Bases (LDB / 96) and its regulations which introduced the mandatory teacher training at full undergraduate courses, they proliferated, mainly in the private colleges to meet the needs of professionals. Although unlicensed, they have acted as teachers in Basic Education (EB) and at Federal Institutes of Education since 2008, notably in Natural Sciences field. However, due to the continuing social and economic devaluation of professionals' work in this education level, degrees, unlike the bachelor's, they still suffer from low demand and high evasion, especially those offered by public universities, historically more difficult to access and with high student retention.

The situation becomes worse in many of these degrees, particularly those related to Chemistry and Physics teachers training, as the few freshmen who remain in the courses, in order to get involved in research projects in specific areas of chemical or physical knowledge promoted by bachelors trainers, quit the teaching profession in EB. Thus, the licensees are encouraged to follow other careers and deviate from the degree formative purpose. (Sá, 2012).

Marques and Pereira (2002) have pointed a contradiction in Brazilian education: EB teachers' shortage and low occupancy in undergraduate courses regarding specific disciplines. Regarding this need, Freitas concluded that it was not a current or emergency problem, but a chronic problem produced by the State's failure on quality public education maintenance and teachers training. (Freitas, 2007).

As explained at MEC/Capes website, Pibid - Institutional Program Teaching Scholarship Initiation - established in 2007, aims to promote students inclusion in undergraduate programs in the context of public schools from their early beginning. The undergraduates entering the Initiation Teaching Program (IDs) receive a monthly scholarship to develop didactic and pedagogical activities, under the guidance of a University faculty member and the supervision of a Basic Education teacher of the partner partner school.

Among the integration explicit purposes are: providing undergraduates opportunities to create and participate in methodological and technological experiments; developing teaching practices that seek to overcome the problems identified in teaching and learning process and encouraging work between schools and universities.

In our perception, the implicit goal of PIBID is to reverse the teachers' shortage in EB which has been registered by MEC statistics (Brazil, 2010). Facing the reality of social and economic professionals devaluation working in EB, the Brazilian state, designing and implementing Pibid, is seeking to build new discourses on teaching career. Those speeches invoke the importance of these teachers' work and are closely linked to the revaluation of EB professionals, either through the national minimum wage institution; the stimulus to work together with these universities trainer teachers and undergraduate students (future teachers); or by encouraging continuing education, among other actions aimed at giving a new status to these professionals.

We understand that the establishment of Capes Education Basic Board for Pibid is an action to enhance the undergraduates and rescue training purposes of these courses which may contribute to more undergraduates actually become EB teachers. In this sense, Pibid is very important. However, despite the relevance of the program to the education system, we agree with Andre (2009) when he says that is not enough only invest in initial and continuing training of teachers to restore education quality, it is also necessary to ensure school working conditions, decent wages and career plan, as well as short medium and long term policies to cover all the other school actors as coordinators, directors, and particularly, students.

The aim of this paper is to discuss Pibid's contribution to the establishment of teachers' identities in the context of a degree course, using as a backdrop the speeches of Teaching Initiation Fellows (IDs) on their experiences in the subproject Pibid Chemistry / Uneb - Initial and Continuing Training - Development of Teaching Materials for Chemistry Teaching.

## **Identity Constitution**

The assumed identity concept comes from cultural studies and sociological approach. We believe that the cultural studies (Hall, 2009; Rose and Corradi, 2007; Smith, 2009; Woodward, 2009) and sociology approaches (Dubar, 2005) are complementary. On the two sides it is emphasized that although there are entities or natural / social world objects, they have no intrinsic essence. The meanings will always be produced and shared in a group, as a result of their culture, seen here as social practice. Since in our understanding educationis part of the culture it also produces meanings from discourses that are built.

The "naturalist" identification concept (common sense) implies that it "is built from the recognition of some common origin, or from features that are shared with other groups and people, or from the same ideal." (Hall 2009, p.106). Opposed to this essentialist concept, the author proposes a discursive approach that understands the identification as something in progress, an unfinished process that requires certain conditions to exist as, for example, material and symbolic resources.

According to this discursive identification approach, Hall (2009) proposes a concept of a strategic and positional identity in which there is not a stable individual core that remains identical over time. Similarly, when one extrapolates the identity concept to the cultural level, the author draws attention to the collective self, also not "able to stabilize, fix or guarantee the cultural belonging or immutable 'unity' that overrides all the other differences - allegedly artificial " (Hall, 2009, p.108).

We agree with Hall (2009) when he states that:

It is precisely because identities are constructed within and not outside the discourse that we need to understand them as produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices for specific strategies and initiatives. (Hall, 2009, p.109).

Thus, we understand that the activities carried out within a Pibid subproject bear the marks of each of the institutions involved - the university and partner public schools - and are designed according to the worldview of its actors, being those views consistent with certain formations and supported by specific discourses.

Woodward (2009) also addresses the issue of identities construction through the discourse in specific historical and institutional sites. However, it introduces subjectivity as another factor in determining our investment in particular identities. According to the author, subjectivity is related to the understanding we have of ourselves and involves thoughts, conscious and unconscious emotions about who we are, but it is exercised in a social context in which the language and culture build meaning that will only be effective if they recruit us as subjects. In this context, identities arise: "Subjects are thus subjected the discourse and must themselves take it up as individuals who so position themselves. The positions which we take up and identify with constitute our identities." (Woodward, 2009, p.55). According to the author, although we represent multiple identities according to as personal / individual and social needs (we assume various subject positions), there will always be a particular identity for which we will be recruited for being recognized in it, "Yes, that's me" (p.59).

Dubar (2005) emphasizes the role of social factors in identities formation. On the assumption that socialization theories are almost indistinguishable from major social sciences theories, the author suggests that it would be possible to distinguish primary socialization from secondary socialization and emancipate the socialization concept of school and children fields in order to apply it to other fields, such as the professional field and mainly relate it to social change problems. This author believes that the socialization is no longer defined as child development, as culture learning or as incorporation of a *habitus* and is now a product of a living world that, as such,

[...] It can be destroyed and built over the existence. Socialization becomes a process of construction, deconstruction and reconstruction of identities linked to various spheres of activity (mainly professional) that everyone finds during his lifetime and which must learn to **become an actor.** (Dubar, 2005, p.XVII, emphasis added).

Under this framework, the central question for the sociologist becomes the way in which social actors identify themselves with each other and then

This question is inseparable from the definition of the action context is also the context of the **definition of self and others**. As an actor (taken as such), each has certain "definition of the situation" in which it appears. This definition [...] uses categories that may have different origins and takes the form of arguments involving interests and values, positions and placements. (Dubar, 2005, p.XIX, emphasis added).

Dubar adds (2005) that the actors self-definitions in any context are given not only due to their current partners, because each one has a story, a personal and social past to determine their current identities. In his sociological identities approach, the author seeks to elucidate socially relevant identification forms in a givensphere of action, which he calls "identity forms". In this approach, he articulates two meanings to the terms socialization and identity, namely, socialization activities, or "relational" socialization of actors that interact in acontextof action (identities "to another") and an individual socialization or "biographical" socialization of the actors who are engaged in acontext of action (identities "for the self"). The author also assumes that there is no "essential" identitybut identities built by language in a specific social context and historic time.

By questioning the identity and difference concepts as "what it is and what is not," Silva (2009, p.74) indicates that, from this perspective, both identity and difference would be self-contained, that is, they simply exist. However, in order to the author make a statement such as "I am Brazilian" it is clear that it refers to an identity that does not end in itself, since it only makes sense "because there are other humans who are not Brazilians." (Silva, 2009, p.75). Therefore, saying "I am Brazilian" generates a long string of negative expressions: "I am not Argentine", "I am not Japanese", among many other national identities. Thus, "the statements about the difference only make sense if understood in its relation to identity claims." (Silva, 2009, p.75).

From Silva's perspective (2009), identity and difference are not only interdependent, they are be "the result of acts of linguistic creation" and not essences or things that were waiting to be "revealed or discovered, respected or tolerated", but things to be actively produced in the "context of cultural and social relations." (Silva, 2009, p.76). According to him, identity and difference are closely related to the language and also to representation systems, which are understood in the poststructuralist perspective. In his opinion, representation is conceived "[...] as any system of signification, a form of meaning attribution." (Silva, 2009, p.91).

Rosa and Corradi (2007) bring contributions to the identity concept as something fragmented, multiply constructed by discourses, practices and positions and in a constant process of transformation. The authors share Marin'sconcern (2002) regarding teacher training and their identities: "When we turn to teachers and their training courses, it is pertinent to ask: Old or new identities? What do we know about teachers in these analytical perspectives? I think very little. "(Marin, cited by Rosa and Corradi, 2007, p.49).

These authors developed an empirical research with students in supervised internship of anevening undergraduate Chemistry course. The research results showed that the undergraduates cultural origin (biographic identity / private history) implied in the production of various meanings, discourses and practices in undergraduate education. According to the authors, the identification process by which the undergrads go through do not erase"circumstances, feelings, stories and professional experiences, which may be related to other cultures besides the school one" and instead "come in negotiation and dispute processes regarding theteacher's identity formation in rich histories and, at the same time, tense, confrontational and pregnant with experience. "(Rose and Corradi, 2007, p.53).

We believe that the results obtained by these authors corroborate Dubar's theoretical contributions (2005) that propose the identity forms built by the current discourse in a social / institutional context arefull of values and positions brought by each individual's personal history.

According to the given perspectives, identities are not fixed, stable, coherent, unified, permanent, homogeneous, final, finished, identical, transcendental (Silva, 2009); on the contrary, they are contingent, contradictory and have to be negotiated (Woodward, 2009). They are conditional, built by discourses, practices and positions in specific historical and institutional sites, within formations and particular discursive practices by natural strategies and initiatives (Hall, 2009); they are built, deconstructed and rebuilt in the various activities that we practice during life, especially in the professional sphere (Dubar, 2005).

In agreement with the referenced authors, we believe that our identities are always built and rebuilt in the clash between the individual self and the collective self, both mutants. Thus, our identities are produced by the conjunction of identities established in social relations (to the other) and the individual level (subjective or to the self), always within a sociocultural context in which we operate.

Understanding Education and Pibid as social practices developed by people with their subjectivities, embedded in their respective educational institutions culture, we believe that multiple identities emerge in such program activities. Therefore, we bring our reflections on the IDs' speeches in order to understand how the activities may be contributing to the identity construction of the various members of our subproject.

## Methodology

#### **Design, Instruments and Research Subjects**

We chose to use a qualitative approach to understand this one to be the most suitable to penetrate and understand the meaning and intent of the speeches, experiences, values, perceptions, desires, needs and attitudes of those involved in the research focus. In this sense, we agree with Bogdan and Biklen (1994) on the qualitative approach design as a research method which seeks to describe and analyze complex experiences, offering opportunity to emerge disparate views.

The study subjects were seven students from teaching initiation program (IDs) identified as ID1, ID2, ID3, ID4, ID5, ID6 and ID7. The personal account of each student is the main source of the data presented here and will be used to boost our reflection on the contribution of Pibid for the teacher identity constitution. Such reports were about their experiences in the development of subproject activities Pibid Chemistry/Uneb. We highlight below some

activities which were carried out by licensees and that supported the assumption of various identity forms perceived.

The first activity was the building of atom concrete models, a inside the perspective historically known as Rutherford model, using beads with different sizes and colors to portray protons, neutrons and electrons; wire to represent the diameter of the atom and at the same time to be a support for nylon yarns symbolizing the orbits in which electrons would rotate. Protons and neutrons are joined by nylon yards representing the nuclei of different hydrogen atom isotopes (protium, deuterium and tritium) and their respective ions (H<sup>+</sup>, H<sup>-</sup>) and also the 16 oxygen atom isotope. These models were taken to a suburban school in Salvador city so that students from three high school classes could manipulate and "count" the subatomic particles represented as constituents of the nucleus and electron cloud in order to promote the electrical nature of matter perception and contribute to the concepts understanding.

In the second activity, the group made an overall assessment of Pibid subproject explaining the difficulties encountered in its implementation and pointing out possible solutions to improve it. The evaluation was made orally by the coordinator, in writing by the supervisor, and as responses to a questionnaire by the IDs.

In the third activity the ID planned and executed a time of differentiated learning called "The Day of Chemistry" in order to introduce Chemical Reactions content in a playful way with the use of experiments.

#### **Procedure**

During Pibid Chemistry / Uneb subproject, we noted that the IDs assumed different forms of identity or multiple identities and sought, from reports appreciation, detect their perception of their own identities adopted in the activities development. The reports were read, again and again, until they began to emerge the contours of the units of analysis which we interpreted as the most significant for the research subjects. After this process, we organized and shared units to identify trends and patterns. Thus, the categories of analysis would not be pre-established but emerge from the research subjects answers.

## Results and Discussion: Identities found - how to interpret them?

By assessing the IDs reports we defined four (04) categories of analysis: monitors (MON), Basic Education teachers (PEB), research professors (PI) and practice reflective teachers (PR), all related to the action context, according to Dubar's sociological approach (2005), that is, socialization activities or "to the other".

At various times and in the subproject actors' speeches, we noted elements that remind us of identity forms on sensitivity issues and emotional characteristics, also arising from the individual formation - his life story - which points to the biographical socialization or Dubar's "for yourself" (2005), but rather exploited by Woodward (2009) as "subjectivity." According to the latter author among many subject positions that are exposed in the social context there is one for which we are more strongly challenged by ourselves for being recognized because of our thoughts and emotions, which can be conscious or unconscious, subjective.

In all IDs' accounts, we noticed signs to a target identity - PEB - and, initially, they denoted the assumed identity of MON: "I had to be aware that we were there to assist the teacher and not to take her place" - says the ID1. It is noted in that speech, as well as the following, that the IDs, from the beginning, were being strongly challenged by future identity: " Pibid

gave me many important moments, one was when the teacher allowed me to monitor, conduct class talking about atomic models [...] "- said ID5.

In developing his lines the IDs explicit that were searching for something else, that is, for them the act of observing was not enough: "I would like to have the opportunity to speak more in class, [...], I would like to have more opportunity to teach students [...] " (ID1). On this same point, another ID said:

Initially, I was guided by the coordinator to write down all my impressions in the logbook, so I did it. Even with this guidance I was looking forward to putting "hands-on", i.e., to produce and apply materials for making less boring classes. (ID4).

The incorporation of PEB target identity arises in the course of developed activities and we naturally see its gradual appropriation by the IDs, implicit fact, for example, during ID3 statement:

On this day I went home anguished, reflecting more about my position as future professional; It made me want to change this reality. What if this was happening in my classroom? Would I let the math problems aside and think about Chemistry or utilize strategies to join chemistry and mathematics? [...] (ID3).

Analyzing the IDs speeches from the perspective pointed out by Hall (2009) that there is a stable core of the individual self to remain the same over time, we realized that the IDs manifestations portray this movement to achieve or at least reflect and to position itself as PEB and not as MON.

The IDs also demonstrate a sense of belonging for the workplace - school. They report the desire to link education, explain the enchantment and pleasure of being in the classroom and being a teacher.

[...] I felt very accomplished and at that moment I was sure that the classrooms would be my workspace, see the students' curious eyes, listen and answer their questions, listen first "teacher! "It's very exciting, especially if this teacher is you. (ID1).

In this process of PEB identity incorporation, in addition to the use of learning resources, concerns with intrinsic aspects of the classroom permeate, such as the arrangement of chairs, discipline, how to hold the attention of students, their motivation, among others; all for the sake of learning, as reported by one of the IDs.

[...] Be in a row, in a semicircle or any other form of storage, my concern here is not to teach cleaning the place up, but an almost desperate option to encourage all chairs, students and minds to be directed to the class central motif that is learning.

When I realized that the situation was getting worse, I decided to do a quick review of the atomic models. They began to silence until you reach the point where the only voice of the room was mine.

When the teacher entered the room to warn that the class was over, she was startled by the class behavior. (ID2).

Imbued of being a teacher and perceive themselves as such, the IDs feel able or become able to make decisions and take actions facing challenges which are presented in class regency. This process is ongoing and, in our view, it is an important contribution to the teacher identity construction which arises only in effective teaching practice. The undergraduate student who does not participate in Pibid, in general, only experiences this process in supervised curriculum component. The experience made possible by Pibid allows to anticipate concerns and make decisions to solve them, which is according to Machado for whom "not only the past but also the future acts for identity shaping[...]. The self desired is thus a source of motivation to new forms of identity." (Machado, 2003, p. 54-55).

It is also possible to glimpse the IDs reports as an evidence of beginning a process of building a researcher teacher identity - PI. During the group meetings, when the observation of classes was under discussion; monitoring of school students to ask questions; and their performance in the assessments was analyzed, concerns were revealed by IDs pertaining to this identity.

One of the activities carried out in the sub-project was the concrete atomic models building. The same arose from IDs realization that students of the partner school had learned problems atom concepts problems, cation and anion, even after the supervisor had given this topic. During the discussions about the problem the identity assumed by everyone in the group was the PEB. From there, the whole group made a reference survey on specific materials for the theme and built their models adapting some related ideas. At this stage of activity, IDs, supervisor and coordinator shared PI identities. During specific atomic models application, the licensees took the supervisor and coordinator's MON identity. The ID6 reflection exemplifies one of the scenarios where one perceives the assumption of PI identity.

[...] It was a time when we can come together to find both causes as a solution to this obstacle, since it was not the expectations we had as students were attending classes and responding well to the exercises. [...] This activity aimed to encourage reading and reading comprehension by the students and the idea came up at a meeting to discuss alternatives to increase the performance of the front students to some basic difficulties, as the interpretation of the issues, problems with math, among others. [...] (ID6).

Upon completion of the activity, the members of Pibid Group took over the PR identities to evaluate its intervention, pointing out the positive and negative aspects in order to improve the work. We note that in the same situation, there is the possibility of assuming different identities depending on the needs met and developed roles.

Conceiving the biographic identities are closely linked to the teachers' identities in the context of Pibid group, we believe it is important to signal that in IDs speeches this relationship can be perceived and, more importantly, one can identify not only the identities "for you"/subjective can influence identities" for the other "/ relational, but the reverse is also possible as it becomes evident from ID7's words:

[...] I had great difficulty - I still have a few times - to show that I do not know anything, but living with the wisest people and more experienced than I am showed me that we can not know about everything and, show do not know, lets us know about it. (ID7).

Within this subproject IDs performed the exercise to evaluate educational processes, self evaluate and evaluate peers; typical work of teachers in their various identities, which confirms that regarding Pibid Chemistry/Uneb group's activities each actor plays multiple identities that are permanently built.

#### **Conclusions**

We understand that the actions implemented by Pibid Chemistry/Uneb subproject had the potential to contribute to the construction and reconstruction of multiple identities related to the teaching profession in the context in which the actors are inserted; these identities which are permeated by the life story of each ID.

Concern problems identified in teaching and learning process are typical of professional teachers, so it can be said that all subproject actors mentioned herein assumed that identity. It was noticed that the IDs, the main focus of this paper, assuming distinct identity forms: monitors, Basic Education teachers, researchers and reflective teachers.

All these multiple identities, collective/"to the other" were established in the context of this particular Pibid group, marked by individual identities / "for you" of each of the actors, many of whom come from suburban public school, so knowledgeable of difficulties of those students.

Although identifying the Pibid contribution for the ID of the teacher identity construction process, anticipating experiences inherent to the profession and consequently strengthening this licensing formation, we must register our concern about two aspects: by itself, Pibid is not able to give account of the huge Brazilian educational demands; and, in fact, it constitutes a remedial action sustained by problems in the public school system which once solved implies emptying Pibid current objectives.

It is important to note that the introduction of Pibid in the national education scene is loaded with speeches which are socioculturally appropriate, in which the teaching profession revaluation is searched, considered positive by us. However, we believe it is necessary to reflect on the program and the uncritical appropriation of these discourses by those who think Pibid is the Brazilian basic education quality savior.

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