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Research article

# Construction of teacher identity in a novice teacher with innovative traits: a biographical narrative study

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## Abstract

This article emerges from a broader investigation into the construction of the professional identity of a novice teacher with innovative traits. It is based on a dialectical understanding of the teacher socialisation process, which recognises novice teachers as active subjects in shaping their professional identity. The central objective is to understand which elements have influenced the construction of a teacher identity oriented towards educational innovation, based on life trajectories, training processes and initial professional integration experiences. In this way, we consider identity as a situated, relational and constantly evolving construction. Methodologically, the research is framed within a qualitative paradigm, specifically the biographical narrative method, from which we have developed a unique account. Discursive analysis of the data allowed us to identify distinct turning points in the teacher identity construction process, revealing how their school life, family relationships, university education and the tensions experienced on entering the school institution influence their critical stance and the development of a teacher identity committed to educational innovation. Hence, the

article provides insights into how novice teachers can resist traditional school cultures and undertake identity reconstruction processes geared towards educational innovation.

**Keywords** teacher identity; novice teacher; educational innovation; socialisation; initial education

## Introduction

This article presents the initial findings of a broader study on the construction of identity among novice teachers with innovative traits. In the Spanish education system (the context in which our research is framed) teacher education and professional development have been at the centre of the debate on improving school quality and educational innovation. The route to primary education teaching involves a four-year university degree – prior to adapting to the European Higher Education Area (EHEA), this was a diploma – which provides the required professional qualifications, while optional postgraduate and master’s programmes offer opportunities for specialisation and professional development. However, despite the progress made, the reality concerning schools in this country continues to be marked by traditional teaching models and an obsolete hegemonic school culture that often limits initiatives for change and innovation (Imbernón, 2020; Pérez-Gómez, 2023). In this scenario, novice teachers join institutions that tend to reproduce inherited logic, putting to the test the novice teachers’ beliefs, values and knowledge constructed during their initial education, thus defining their ability to act, resist or reproduce the existing order. Within this framework, educational innovation is constituted as a privileged field for analysing the processes of continuity and rupture that the teaching profession is undergoing, if we understand that any profound change or innovation involves a revision of the way teachers see themselves, their professional functions and the meaning they attribute to their work and, consequently, their professional identity.

The article analyses the case of a primary school teacher in her second year of professional practice, whose life journey and educational background show how the construction of an innovative profile does not respond to a single event or stage, but rather to the interaction between different biographical, familial, educational and professional experiences. Her experience of a non-traditional school during her childhood, the pedagogical model transmitted by her mother and her university education – specifically, an official master’s degree in educational innovation, which is not compulsory for teaching, taken after her initial education and before entering the profession – all converge in the construction of a teaching identity oriented towards educational innovation. Thus, employing a biographical narrative approach, we explore the different moments in her life, education and professional career that have influenced the formation of a teaching identity committed to educational innovation.

## Theoretical framework

In recent years, the study of teacher identity has come to occupy an increasingly prominent place in educational research, currently consolidating itself as a field of specific interest within the teacher education framework (Beijaard et al., 2004, 2022). Based on teacher identity, teachers construct ideas about who they want to be or how they should understand their profession, as well as their place within the social fabric. Likewise, teacher identity is recognised as reflecting the decisions teachers make regarding their professional practice and the content they teach, and so on. It is therefore a concept that is at the very core of the teaching profession (Bajardi and Álvarez-Rodríguez, 2015). Although it is difficult to define its meaning, the most recent research (Day, 2020; Madueño and Márquez, 2020; Paesani et al., 2024; Pereira et al., 2022; Schellings et al., 2021) agrees that teacher identity is not a fixed entity, but rather a process under constant construction, influenced by biographical, relational and contextual factors. Hence, it is simultaneously: (1) the result of a personal construction, supported by self-reflection in which beliefs, teacher education and life experiences play a fundamental role; and (2) the result of collective construction, determined by the sociopolitical, cultural and professional contexts in which it is inserted (Flores and Day, 2006). Thus, as Dubar (2002) argues, teacher identity is constituted as the

always provisional and unstable result of constant negotiations between the subject and their context within the framework of a socialisation process specific to their profession.

Studies such as that by Vaillant (2008) situate the beginning of this socialisation process during initial education, whereas other research argues that socialisation begins during the first school experiences as students, a time in which future teachers begin to implicitly form their own theories and beliefs about what school is, what it means to teach or what it means to be a teacher (Alliaud, 2004; Beauchamp and Thomas, 2010). However, this learning is shaped throughout life and is also influenced by the teachers' own life experiences (Gajardo-Asbún, 2019). From an ecological perspective (Bronfenbrenner, 1979), the family, as part of the microsystem, is fundamental to formulating cognitive and affective schemes that guide one's perception of the world. In this regard, specific literature has highlighted that early experiences – not only in the school context, but also at home – contribute to constructing implicit representations and theories about teaching, school and the role of teachers (Beijaard et al., 2000; Lortie, 1975; Nghia and Tai, 2017). In this way, initial influences are decisive in the socialisation process, since they provide the teacher with a values base that is later articulated in their professional performance. Similarly, the first years of professional practice are especially relevant, when teachers reconfigure their professional identity according to the real contexts in which they are inserted (Cantón and Tardif, 2018; Cortés et al., 2014).

Indeed, incorporating oneself into professional practice forces novice teachers, while assuming their new position as teachers, to negotiate their identity in the school context. However, this context is usually dominated by a solid established culture that projects its own expectations onto the teacher in terms of their professional tasks (Bolívar, 2007; Feiman-Nemser, 2003). This point is argued in various research works focused on the impact of teaching practice during initial education (Contreras-Domingo, 1987; Falcón and Arraiz, 2020; González-Sanmamed and Fuentes-Abeledo, 2010; Pérez-Gómez, 1997), as well as on incorporating novice teachers into professional practice (Barba and González-Calvo, 2014; Marcelo, 1993, 2022). This could lead to theoretical knowledge gathered during initial education limiting the novice teachers' ability to innovate in an institutional context. Despite their achievements and advances, schools continue to resist change in the Spanish context (Bolívar, 2025; Pérez-Gómez and Soto-Gómez, 2022), resulting in traditional practices being reproduced – that is to say, forms of teaching that respond to a type of technical rationality. According to Gimeno-Sacristán and Pérez-Gómez (2008), these are set in a transmissive, instrumental and reproductive conception of teaching, which, starting from a prescribed and fragmented curriculum, consist of the unidirectional transmission of closed content understood to be universally valid. In this context, it is the textbook that organises the teaching–learning process, while learning is understood as the mere accumulation of knowledge transmitted by the teacher, who holds the authority of knowledge, and assessment is reduced to a mere grading process. Nevertheless, this view ignores the fact that the process of incorporation into professional practice is neither homogeneous nor deterministic. Although extensive research has been carried out from a functionalist perspective regarding the incorporation of novice teachers into professional practice and their professional socialisation, highlighting the ways in which they adapt to the established institutional culture, Giroux (2018) pointed out that schools are not only places determined by power relations, where the reproduction of the status quo is guaranteed – they are also spaces of resistance, both from the student and teacher, fracturing the deterministic view proposed by functionalist sociology. In this vein, other research has highlighted the existence of novice professionals who, in contrast, question the socialisation processes in which they are immersed and challenge the traditional school culture by promoting innovative processes. For example, in Spain, González-Calvo and Barba (2013) show, through the autobiographical narrative of a novice teacher, how continuous reflection allowed them to break with traditional school models and assume the role of an agent of change. Similarly, Barba (2008) shows that action research helps novice teachers to resist the assimilation of the dominant habitus (Bourdieu and Passeron, 2018) – understood as a system of dispositions that guides the subjects' perception, thought and action, favouring the unconscious reproduction of social and cultural structures – and to build a transformative praxis through shared reflection. Internationally, Gray and Seiki (2020) demonstrate how novice teachers manage to challenge institutional pressures and maintain more student-centred practices, showing that, despite the socialising force of school culture, novice teachers can exercise their agency and drive innovation processes.

Thus, we can observe how, despite the socialising influence of school culture, novice teachers can alter prevailing professional practices by exercising their capacity for agency and acting as drivers of innovation processes. From this perspective, educational innovation cannot be reduced

to implementing superficial or merely instrumental changes, such as the incorporation of digital technologies or new methodologies, a view which, according to Carbonell (2014), is influenced by a traditional pedagogical model that leads to a technocratic view of change. On the contrary, we start from a progressive vision of innovation (Carbonell, 2014), which understands it as a process deliberately searching for improvement, originating in concrete practices and collective reflection, and which involves a profound questioning of the beliefs and values that sustain the hegemonic school culture and the professional practice and thinking. Similarly, we agree with Martínez-Bonafé (2008) in understanding that innovation is, above all, a political practice that involves taking a stand against the existing order, questioning the social and institutional structures that determine the school experience, and promoting its transformation, as well as that of society, in terms of social justice.

In contrast to the traditional model described, innovative practice represents a break with traditional teaching in epistemological, practical and political terms, since, while the latter is based on the transmission of predefined knowledge and the preservation of existing school culture, as we have argued, innovation stems from critical reflection on practice and deliberate action to transform it, rethinking the aims of education, the relationship between theory and practice, and the role of teachers as agents of change. Based on these approaches, innovation involves, above all, a process of identity reconstruction that allows teachers to rethink their place in the school, the meaning of their professional task and the relationships they establish with knowledge, teaching, the curriculum, students, colleagues and society in general. From this perspective, and following the contributions of various prominent authors in the specialised literature, innovative teachers are distinguished by: (a) an attitude of questioning and critically reflecting on professional practice, which involves reviewing the beliefs, values and theories that underpin it and reconstructing pedagogical thinking based on experience (Carbonell, 2014); (b) the capacity for agency and professional autonomy, which positions them as active agents of change, capable of making informed decisions and acting on their own judgement in the face of institutional pressures and hegemonic practices (Santos-Guerra, 1997); (c) a disposition towards interprofessional collaboration, understanding that innovation arises from exchange with others and the shared construction of knowledge (Hargreaves, 2018); and (d) an ethical and political stance that leads them to recognise the non-neutral nature of education and to direct their actions towards the transformation of school culture and the democratisation of schools (Martínez-Bonafé, 2008).

Using this approach, we can understand the importance of adopting a dialectical conceptualisation of the teacher socialisation process (Zeichner, 1985); that is, rather than being understood as a process of passive adaptation to institutional culture, it is regarded as a space of interaction and tension between the structures of the school context and the subject's capacity for agency. Hence, the starting point is the idea that teachers are not passive agents, but rather that they actively interpret, negotiate and reconstruct their practice. Therefore, this explains how novice teachers can resist environmental pressures and actively participate in the construction of their identity, challenging the established professional culture and establishing themselves as innovative professionals.

## Methodology

This present article is part of a broader study on how the identity of novice teachers with innovative traits is constructed, showing the initial analyses born from this research. It defines the following objectives: (1) to investigate the academic biography of novice teachers since this represents the first space where teacher socialisation occurs; (2) to delve into the influence of initial education in constructing their professional knowledge and teacher identity; and (3) to understand the impact that access to professional practice has on the identity reconstruction process, looking at how identity is negotiated in a professional environment that can be both a facilitator and an obstacle to developing innovation processes.

Methodologically, we have adopted a qualitative approach, specifically the naturalistic-interpretative research paradigm (Guba and Lincoln, 2002), as we understand that socio-educational reality is holistic, ideographic and contingent. A research design based on the biographical narrative method was adopted because of its potential to 'analyse professional teacher identities (common and individual), their eventual "crisis" and development, as well as to account for the identity dynamics of action' (Bolívar et al., 2005, p. 5). Specifically, a professional account was developed following the single-narrative model (Pujadas-Muñoz, 2002). This model was chosen because the selected methodological approach – the one most commonly used to address the phenomenon

under study – is based on the premise that the research interest lies in understanding and interpreting reality through the meanings that the actors involved in it perceive as important, and that the basis for producing knowledge lies in the descriptive and interpretive capacity of the phenomenon, not in the search for generalisations or statistical representativeness. In this sense, the transferability (Guba, 2008) that guarantees the rigour and quality of the research is not determined by the size of the sample, but by the descriptive richness of the narrative and the interpretative depth that allows us to capture the complexity of the identity process through its idiosyncrasies.

The participant was a primary school teacher in her second academic year of professional practice who, after completing her initial training and before entering the profession, graduated in a master's degree in educational innovation. This degree was characterised by a critical and reflective approach to teaching practice, based on the dialogical construction of knowledge and an understanding of education as a transformative practice. She was selected through purposive sampling following specific criteria (Flick, 2015): (a) being a novice teacher, that is, having no more than five years of professional experience; and (b) displaying innovative nuances in her professional thinking and practice. The identification of these innovative nuances was based on an initial assessment of the first interview we conducted, in which the participant expressed characteristics linked to the profile of an innovative teacher: (1) specific education in educational innovation; (2) a professional stance contrary to traditional schooling, as evidenced by her critical discourse from forms of teaching based on a transmissive, instrumental and reproductive conception of teaching and learning; and (3) explicit references to the development of practices that depart from traditional schooling. The sample was accessed through the networks of the research team, who were familiar with active teachers who could fit the required profile. The participant was selected from a sample of 15 participants, with the remaining 14 being discarded following the initial interview for not meeting criterion b (presenting innovative nuances in their thinking and professional practice).

The research instruments used to gather data were: (a) the semi-structured, in-depth interview, which was the primary research technique; (b) an analysis of professional documents; and (c) informal conversations. The process of collecting the initial data presented in this article was carried out during the course of an academic year.

### **Semi-structured, in-depth interview**

Given the nature of the study object, the interview was designed from a biographical narrative perspective (Bolívar et al., 2005), for which different biographical themes or dimensions were developed (childhood and school biography, initial education, start of teaching); each consisting of a list of questions/topics that enabled us to investigate the teacher's life and professional trajectory, from her early experiences as a student to the present. A total of three interviews were conducted, each lasting between 60 and 90 minutes. These were audio-recorded, transcribed faithfully and negotiated with the participant. The information gathered in the interviews was triangulated through document analysis and informal conversations to assess the credibility and confirmability of the research (Guba, 2008).

### **Professional documents**

Various professional documents were analysed, allowing us to gain insight into the teacher's situated identity, or identity in action. The documents analysed were: (1) classroom syllabi for the academic year in which the research was conducted, describing the teaching sequences designed by the participant, the activities to be carried out, the assessment criteria, the methodological aspects, the timing and the areas involved in the development of each sequence; (2) virtual materials – social media and the teacher's professional blog – in which the teacher systematically documented the development of the classroom sequences, reflections on their deployment and student learning assessments; and (3) audiovisual materials – classroom video recordings – made during class sessions, which provide direct evidence of teacher–student interaction, the teaching strategies used, the distribution of space and so on.

### **Informal conversations**

As Goetz and Lecompte (2022) point out, stories that arise spontaneously in everyday conversations are especially useful in naturalistic research, as they allow us to understand the topics that most interest

teachers. Unlike interviews, these stories are not guided by a script or an explicit research agenda but arise spontaneously outside the formal interview context. In our research, informal conversations took place between the participant and the researchers at the end of each interview session as well as later on, especially in virtual spaces, during various informal, unplanned and unstructured communication opportunities. They were recorded in field notes taken immediately after each interaction and incorporated into the raw data extracted from the interviews and professional documents. Thus, the informal conversations facilitated the emergence of meanings and experiences relevant to the teacher's identity-building process, lending greater richness and depth to the story.

The participant was informed of the research objectives, the conditions of confidentiality and her right to withdraw at any time. All interviews and informal conversations were incorporated with her express consent, transcribed and anonymised using pseudonyms, preserving the confidentiality of both personal and third-party data. The data were stored securely and their use was restricted to the researchers.

Data analysis was conducted through an inductive and emergent process. To do so, we followed the framework proposed by Fernández-Sierra and Fernández-Larragueta (2013) based on the extraction of emerging themes grouped into broad categories. This process consisted of dividing, reorganising and coding the collected information and was structured into distinct stages:

1. A thorough reading of the interview transcripts, informal conversation records and collected professional documents was carried out to identify recurring themes and relevant meanings for the participant, linked to the research objectives and open to the emergence of the account. Analytical memos were also prepared to capture initial impressions and establish preliminary links with the theoretical frameworks of reference, favouring an iterative and in-depth analysis (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000).
2. A process was followed by which emerging themes contained in the raw data from each of the sources were tracked, without imposing pre-established categories.
3. These were labelled using words or expressions close to the participant's language, reflecting their own meanings and perspectives. This initial coding was flexible and open, incorporating new themes or redefining existing ones as the process progressed. According to their relationship and interdependence, these emerging themes were grouped into broader pre-categories of analysis aligned with the research objectives, as well as the emerging reality of the narrative. To do this, we systematically compared the emerging themes obtained from the different sources, analysing their convergence and divergence in the meanings and ideas identified. This allowed us to group them into coherent sets, configuring the pre-analysis categories. All interpretative decisions were analysed, debated and agreed upon by the researchers. In addition, to reinforce the procedure's transparency and traceability, the decisions were recorded in analytical memos documenting the process followed and the justifications for the interpretations made.
4. Data triangulation was then performed through a comparative analysis of the emerging categories from each information source. We decided not to use specific qualitative data analysis programs to avoid artificial analysis or biases derived from the counting or quantification mechanisms characteristic of data analysis software; in this way, the interpretive richness of the data was preserved.
5. After pre-categorising the data, a primarily descriptive preliminary report was prepared to identify any gaps and determine whether there was a need to return to the field. At this stage, the third interview with the participant was conducted, and other professional documents were requested in order to broaden understanding concerning certain episodes of her practice, as narrated by the teacher, and to obtain evidence that would allow for a deeper understanding of the coherence between her discourse and her teaching practice.
6. The data analysis process continued iteratively until theoretical saturation was reached, that is, the moment at which incorporating new data no longer provided additional information on the emerging categories (Strauss and Corbin, 2002). However, saturation is limited to the categories that emerged in this phase of the study since, as we pointed out, the article presents the initial analyses of a broader ongoing research project. Hence, the definitive categorisation was carried out based on all the significant data available (Table 1) and the final research report was prepared. In this report, the descriptions were put into dialogue with the theories of the research team and the evidence from the specialised literature, ensuring a coherent and in-depth interpretation of the identity construction process of the novice teacher with innovative traits, understood as one who, in

her first years of professional practice, develops critical pedagogical practices aimed at educational transformation. This was negotiated with the participant and the research team to guarantee the ethics and credibility of the research (Guba, 2008).

**Table 1. Definitive categorisation and emerging themes**

Final categorisation	Emerging themes
The influence of school biography and family context on identity construction	A different school
	Mother as a role model
	Conflict arising from the transition to a traditional school
	Rejection of traditional school despite 'adapting'
The importance of alternative initial education in the identity construction of the innovative teacher	Little relevance of having 'good marks' in teaching diploma
	Teaching diploma: 'too many theories with no connection to reality'
	Teaching diploma: instructional classes
	Master's degree: key point in her teacher education
	Master's degree: importance for teachers
	Knowledge as a shared construct
	Form one's own thinking
	Master's degree: to understand why I was the way I was. 'Rethinking my career path'
Master's degree: to 'rebuild the profile I want to have'	
Starting out in teaching and the reality shock	Transforming traditional schooling. Master's focus
	Initial 'shock'
	I'm not cut out to be a teacher: frustration, insecurity
	Classroom control one of the biggest concerns
	Classroom conflicts make me someone I don't want to be
The identity construction of the innovative teacher in professional practice	Language difficulties
	Theoretical knowledge for 'decision-making'
	Professional culture questions those who go against the grain
	Coordination with colleagues to innovate
	Importance of reflecting on practice
	Action-research group
	Continuing education linked to reconciling thought and action
	Autonomy and professional empowerment

## Discussion of the data

In this section, we present the initial findings of our research, grouped into the four categories that emerged from the discursive analysis of the data: (1) the influence of school biography and family context on identity construction; (2) the importance of alternative teacher education in the identity construction of the innovative teacher; (3) the beginning of teaching and reality shock; and (4) the identity construction of the innovative teacher in professional practice.

## The influence of school biography and family context on identity construction

For our participant, the ideas and beliefs that constitute her professional thinking began to take shape during her early years at school. Indeed, as the specialised literature has pointed out, school biography is one of the most important socialisation spaces in the process of constructing teacher identity (Figueroa-Céspedes and Guerra, 2022; Tardif, 2004). Before teachers begin their initial training, they have already spent a long time passing through the school system, acquiring theories, albeit poorly developed, about what teaching means or what it means to be a good teacher. These theories are closely related to the teaching models observed during the student stage and are usually characterised by having a very high emotional component, which favours their internalisation and assimilation (Marcelo, 2010). Consequently, they become solid beliefs that are difficult to alter during initial training or professional practice. Therefore, when novice teachers return to school, they usually adopt a traditional role, as this is the main model they experienced as students. However, from the account of the teacher participating in the study, we can see that, despite the existence of a hegemonic school culture resistant to change, there are heterogeneous professional practices and cultures that demonstrate the active role of the actors in constructing social reality. When recalling her first years at school, our participant highlights having experienced a different school, one that moved away from the traditional teaching approach based on transmitting unique knowledge and supported by the textbook as the axis of the teaching and learning process. For her, school was a learning space in which her particular experiences and interests served as a basis for knowing and understanding the world: instead of using a textbook, they wrote stories and poems, gave presentations, went outside the school to explore the town and research the environment, and so on.

In this sense, as evidenced by the study participant, we observed that experiencing a different school – one that prioritises contextualised and relevant learning (Pérez-Gómez, 2023) and the active participation of students in the construction of knowledge – favoured an internalisation of beliefs opposed to the traditional teaching model, reinforcing an identity construction that is removed from dominant models and aligned with innovative pedagogical practices. In this regard, the teacher tells us: ‘Almost all of my companions, unfortunately ... were in a very traditional school, whereas I had experienced that different school firsthand. Perhaps that’s why I think I had a bit of an advantage when it came to putting it into practice and getting those concepts firmly in place.’

It is also worth noting that, for our participant, the importance of these experiences fosters the development of processes of resistance to the powerful socialising influence exerted by the school institution, which teachers also go through after experiencing a different school model.

Hence, our participant tells us that, after experiencing a different school, the rest of her academic career was marked by a school model with similar characteristics: ‘I did fifth and sixth grade with a teacher who was very traditional: “Don Benito”. Don Benito was by the book, sitting one by one and correcting, right, wrong.’

This coincides with research such as that by Bolívar (2025) and Pérez-Gómez (2023). They point out that most schools in Spain remain anchored in structures and routines from bygone eras characterised by uniformity, the imposition of an abstract, homogeneous and Eurocentric culture, and the predominance of academic and disciplinary learning models that favour the fragmentation of knowledge (Pérez-Gómez, 2023; Wagner, 2010).

Faced with this new reality, the participant recalls adapting to it with resignation. However, this adaptation is used exclusively as a strategy to successfully overcome her academic trajectory, since the beliefs internalised during her first experiences as a student allow her to sustain a critique of traditional school practice: ‘In high school, I often said: but how can we be doing this, if what we should be doing is ... I mean, I knew what the teachers should be doing.’

In line with the dialectical perspective of teacher socialisation (Zeichner, 1985) and the theory of resistance proposed by Giroux (2018), this demonstrates that, although the school as a device aims to form a specific habitus that promotes the internalisation of norms and values specific to the institution, it also possesses a certain autonomy and constitutes a space for the production of meanings, in which the actors who participate in it – teachers, students and so on – do not always play a passive role, but can develop resistance strategies that challenge the logic of domination.

In this way, the early socialisation that takes place in the school context is seen as a key element for developing teacher identity, which is in line with most research on how it is constructed. Specifically, we see how experiencing a different school can influence early perceptions of teaching and

also constitute one of the determining elements in building a professional identity oriented towards educational innovation.

However, as we observe in the participant's account, the influence that her time at a 'different' school had on constructing her initial beliefs and theories about teaching, school and her role as a teacher was largely determined by her mother, who was also her teacher during the period in which she experienced that different school: 'And ... of course, it turns out that my mother was my teacher, she was my tutor from first to fourth grade and ... well, she has been my great role model.'

In line with other studies, the participant's account shows that it is not only the academic trajectory that moulds teacher identity; different classic studies (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Lortie, 1975) and more recent research (Fuentes-Reza et al., 2020) indicate that the family context exerts a notable influence on teacher identity construction. It has been documented that the family, as an agent of primary socialisation, generates a sense of belonging in individuals by constituting itself as the first context in which they are nourished by beliefs, values, traditions and so on, and internalise certain thought patterns and social stereotypes that influence identity construction (Fuentes-Reza et al., 2020).

In this regard, it has been highlighted that a teacher's choice of profession is often motivated by the fact that a family member is also a teacher, demonstrating the influence that the family environment has on teachers even before they begin their initial training. However, the influence exerted on the participating teacher by her mother was even greater as, as we pointed out, her mother was also her teacher during those years in which she experienced a school that was far removed from the dominant practices. Hence, for the participating teacher, the construction of a professional way of thinking distanced from hegemonic teaching practices derives not only from having personally experienced this school model, but also from the dual role her mother played as her teacher – and the teaching model learned from her school life – and the fact her mother also shared her pedagogical discourse and experiences of work with her daughter throughout her life: 'At home ... my mother has talked a lot about her work life, right. And she's always had quite a few problems confronting many of her colleagues about how she worked. So, I remember hearing that and seeing how my mother felt, and that really sank in.'

From this testimony, we see how the discourse and emotional experience the mother conveys to her daughter regarding teaching and the need to confront prevailing practices in school generates an ideology in the teacher that shapes her thinking about what it means to be a good teacher and the meaning of education. In this way, teacher identity is formed through informal learning, influenced not only by rational aspects but also by emotional and relational ones (Marcelo, 2010), reflecting the multiple dimensions that permeate teacher identity construction.

### **The importance of alternative teacher education in the identity construction of the innovative teacher**

When our participant recalls her initial training at university, in which she studied for a teaching diploma, she emphasises that this was practically irrelevant in developing her professional identity. In her account, the teacher assumes that this is due to the lack of critical discourse challenging the dominant school practices and the difficulty in establishing links between theory and professional practice, especially in relation to educational change.

As she notes in her account, the initial training programme was very similar to her experience during her final years of primary education and compulsory secondary education and sixth form, as practically all the subjects presented abstract, unique, fragmented and decontextualised knowledge that did not influence the reconstruction of the beliefs and theories she already possessed. She also points out that the teachers held a traditional conception of teaching and learning, based on the one-way transmission of knowledge, with students memorising the knowledge transferred.

In other words, the teaching diploma classes were ... totally, um ... instructive, that is, there was the teacher telling you ... 90 per cent or more, and you were taking notes to pass the exams and little else ... It was the bloke or the woman there telling you a load of stuff and you listened passively and then if you wanted to, you could discuss it on your own or ... or not (laughter) which was not the case. In teacher training, you had to get through it and you had to pass that stage to become a teacher. That's it. Just like in secondary school. Good marks.

Her particular experience coincides with a paradoxical situation regarding initial teacher training, which has been pointed out in the specialised literature for decades: on the one hand, it has been described

as deficient education while, on the other, very little has been done in terms of government policies or within higher education institutions to promote profound changes, ignoring the vast scientific production and multiple international reports arguing that initial teacher education requires substantial change, as it is a key element in future teacher's identity construction and professional development and, thus, in improving educational quality (Fullan, 2002; Fullan et al., 1998; Foro de Sevilla, 2014; Hagger and McIntyre, 2006; Imbernón and Colén, 2015; Manso, 2019; Soto-Gómez et al., 2022; Sureda et al., 2016). Underlying this problem is a historically consolidated view of initial teacher education as 'teacher training', which refers to the idea of technical training for people who perform standardised, relatively routine tasks in contexts understood as homogeneous and controllable, rather than 'teacher education', an approach which, as authors such as Ellis and Childs (2023) point out, involves preparing teachers to perform a professional role as intellectuals, emphasising their role as reflective individuals and generators of knowledge. In this sense, the 'practical theorisation' proposed by Burn et al. (2022) is particularly relevant for rethinking the relationship between universities and schools, as it conceives teacher education as a process of dialogical integration between academic knowledge and the knowledge that emerges from practice.

Hence, in our specific research context (Spain), the relevant literature has highlighted the limited influence of initial training programmes on the construction of professional teaching identity (Falcón and Arraiz, 2020; Imbernón, 2020), despite the relevant teacher education proposals that exist, among which we could highlight 'Lesson Studies', a relatively new strategy in initial teacher education, except in Japan (see Pérez-Gómez and Soto-Gómez, 2022). This is precisely because such training programmes continue to be based on a technical and instrumental paradigm that reproduces the narrow conception of initial teacher education as teacher training and restricts the emancipatory potential of teacher education, which entails the broad professional preparation necessary to carry out the highly complex task of teaching in the postmodern world. In the particular context of our research, the specific literature has shown that initial training programmes have little influence on constructing the teachers' professional identity (Falcón and Arraiz, 2020; Imbernón, 2020). In this regard, our participant stated that her initial university education, in which she worked towards a teaching diploma, was practically irrelevant to developing her professional identity. In her account, the teacher assumes this is due to the lack of critical discourses that challenge dominant school practices and the difficulty in establishing links between theory and professional practice, especially in relation to educational change: 'Did the theory I was taught in teacher training really have any substance? Maybe we need to rethink what theory we're putting into teacher education ... most subjects talked about "change", but very superficially.'

As with schools, teacher education programmes are not isolated from the broader context – social, economic and cultural – in which they are embedded. On the contrary, they are mediated by specific hegemonic interests that enable the social order to be reproduced. Through practices, sometimes implicit, that are part of the so-called hidden curriculum (Torres-Santomé, 2021), the training of future teachers entails transmitting a habitus (Tenti-Fanfani, 2003) that ignores the necessary role of education as a transformative practice. As a result, we find programmes concerned with transmitting a corpus of official knowledge which is anchored in the technocratic and instrumentalised culture of knowledge. Although, as our participant says, 'they talk to you about change', they disregard critical thinking and the pertinent analysis and problematisation of reality – social, academic, political and so on – that the promotion of innovations requires (Díez-Gutiérrez, 2020; Rivas-Flores et al., 2023). Hence, in most cases, the need for change remains nothing more than a reflection that has little impact on practice, since that would require profound organisational and curricular modification, as well as a modification of the thinking and professional praxis of the trainers themselves.

Our participant's account introduces a relevant finding that contrasts with most of the research reviewed. While her teaching diploma training did not impact her professional thinking, completing an official master's degree in educational innovation allowed her to redefine theoretical knowledge and training as essential aspects in building a teacher identity oriented towards innovation. This is because the education programme she experienced during her master's degree operates under a paradigm opposite to the technical rationality prevalent in initial training programmes and, specifically, to the one she herself experienced, that is, it conceives this process within the logical framework of teacher education rather than teacher training.

The fundamental difference that we observed lies in the epistemological matrix that underpins education programmes. When analysing the reality of the participating teacher, we observed that this

programme was based on the dialogic construction of knowledge and the educational process, moving away from the dominant visions of a singular knowledge. As she herself states:

In the master's programme, all the classes were debates. So, in the end, you had to create your own thinking ... In other words, we read a lot of everything the teachers gave us. In the end ... it wasn't like in teacher training, because the classes were about sitting down, no longer reading what you had been assigned, but talking about it. So, there was a lot of preliminary work involved in reading, researching, and ... I also did my own research, because you would read and say, 'Hey, this interests me', and ... you would research and share, and then in class there were talks, debates, but constructive debates.

In this way, the teacher emphasises that, during her master's studies, and in contrast to her initial training, knowledge was understood as a shared construct and not as a storable object transmitted by the teacher, as was the case during her initial training. This was fundamental for the teacher to mobilise her theories and internalised beliefs about education and her role as a professional, which were reconstructed through theoretical knowledge. She expressed it as follows:

Everything I had in my head in terms of 'ideas' and experiences made me give them names and theories, ideas, authors. And I think that's fundamental, to organise your mind and also when it comes to being a teacher ... I think I discovered my life and professional journey there, and how everything influences everything else... I had never considered why I was the way I was ... maybe there I did ... I think those were moments of realisation and of saying: Wow, maybe I'm like this because of this or that, and I want to be like this. And ... both linking things to why I am the way I am and disconnecting myself from things like: I want to be like this, and this may have influenced me. It was a period of personal reflection.

Indeed, the specific literature has pointed out that teachers usually find it difficult to link the theory learned in universities with their professional practice with the internalised theories and beliefs about teaching that they already possess, discarding the possibilities that this has in strengthening teacher identity (Imbernón, 2020). However, the participant's account contrasts with this idea, showing that when teacher education programmes manage to penetrate the nucleus of beliefs and teacher identity, they become a powerful tool for constructing well-founded pedagogical thought, capable of guiding professional practice (Pérez-Gómez, 2010).

In our participant's case, the interaction with the teacher trainers who took a critical stance towards education was decisive in this regard. Their role stands out, distancing itself from the traditional approach in which the teacher is a transmitter of knowledge and the student a passive recipient. On the contrary, these teachers encouraged her to mobilise her own mental frameworks and beliefs about teaching and school through dialectical processes of exchange and construction of meanings based on manipulating theoretical knowledge, allowing her to rethink her role in school.

They invited you to put your point of view on the table and to rethink ... They were the most brutal in terms of transforming the school: if you want to move away from the type of school that reproduces, these are the theoretical bases ... what has influenced me most about them is that rebellious point of being critical of education.

Although the influence of teaching models learned during school life has been commonly pointed out in the literature, we see how the presence of mentors, also in the contexts of initial teacher education, who assume a critical posture towards educational innovation, is a key innovative factor in configuring teacher identity in novice teachers (Flores, 2010).

Finally, another factor that favoured the redefinition of theoretical knowledge in constructing her teaching identity was the inclusion of the concept of educational innovation as a central axis of the teacher education programme. From analysing the teacher's account, we observe that the conceptualisation of the term 'educational innovation' distances itself from reductionist approaches that limit innovation to superficial changes. Instead, it is conceived as a process of profound transformation of teaching thought and practice, and of the school oriented towards the idea of education as a transformative practice (Carbonell, 2014). In this way, the master's degree raised questions that radically contrasted with previous training, fundamentally related to: (1) the need to conceive of the school as

a space of power involved in social reproduction or transformation, since, in effect, 'it is difficult for a major educational change to be successful if it ignores power relations within the school' (Hargreaves, 2018, p. 266); (2) the critical position against the hegemonic school model; and (3) a commitment to school transformation and educational innovation. All of these factors made it possible, in the teacher's words, to 'reconstruct the teaching profile I wanted to have and rethink my career path' upon realising the importance of having intellectual and professional resources, supported by theoretical knowledge, as a basis for her professional performance. Consequently, we observed how this shaped her professional identity, as she began taking on new meaning in her professional role and reworking her discourse about what it means to be 'a good teacher': 'For me, a good professional is a person who tells you why they do what they do ... I think it is super important that teachers know how to value that theoretical basis, to make decisions for a reason and with meaning.'

Hence, our participant's experience demonstrates that initial teacher education can play a central role in constructing the identity of innovative novice teachers. As the literature points out, having a solid theoretical foundation is crucial for resisting the socialising influence of the school and fostering the development of innovation processes. This requires teacher education oriented towards the critical problematisation of education, supported by teacher education models committed to socio-educational transformation and which place the construction of future teachers' practical thinking at their heart (Pérez-Gómez, 2010). However, as we have already observed in our participant's account, initial teacher education is not the only space involved in constructing a teaching identity oriented towards educational innovation; early school experiences play a key role in this process. Likewise, incorporating educational innovation into practice and ongoing education will be fundamental, posing new challenges in this extensive and continuous process of identity construction.

### **First year of teaching: on reality shock**

Thanks to her previous experience, particularly her experience at a different school and her master's degree, our participant approaches the reality of the school with solidly constructed convictions and theories about her professional role. However, for the teacher, entering professional practice is a period dominated by feelings of vulnerability and insecurity due to the impossibility of sustaining her pedagogical position in practice. The classroom appears to be an unpredictable space in which the constant need to manage conflicts, along with the material and symbolic conditions, inhibit the teacher's ability to respond in accordance with her professional beliefs: 'I have to use English, but I can't resolve a conflict using English when the children don't know the language. And of course, 80 per cent of the time was spent managing conflicts.'

In line with the specialised literature, the participant's account shows that vulnerability and disorientation among novice teachers is common, even among those who enter the profession with a solid position regarding their professional work. As Bolívar (2016) states, teacher identity is not constructed solely through internalised beliefs or knowledge developed during initial education, but also through interaction with novice professional and social contexts. Therefore, access to professional practice directly impacts the process of constructing teacher identity, forcing teachers to review, reshape and even contradict their own ideas and values.

In addition to limiting professional activity, the difficulties in reconciling her pedagogical positioning and practice, along with the problems of classroom control, had a decisive effect on the image that the teacher had of herself as a professional, destabilising her core identity. As we see in her account, this generates feelings of frustration and insecurity that make her question her professional competencies: 'Why did I pass if I don't have a clue about anything, I'm no good at this ... I'm not exaggerating in that I came home crying every day because I had one idea and then the reality of the classroom was that ... every minute it changed.'

Classroom management and control arouse strong feelings in any teacher, especially beginners (Beijaard et al., 2022), which is why it is common for teachers' professional identity to be weakened if they are unable to find ways to develop professionally. In this regard, it was also relevant that the participant was completing her probationary period as a civil servant. In Spain, the novice teacher is required to complete a one-year probationary period after passing a selection procedure, during which time they must undergo an institutional assessment process. For our teacher, the fact that she was being assessed generated an internal dichotomy between her own pedagogical convictions – 'doing it well' – and the demands of the system – 'doing the right thing' –, causing her professional identity to destabilise due to

the conflicts that emerge between the claimed identity (or the identity 'for oneself') and the attributed identity ('for others'), in this case, the educational administration (Dubar, 2002). Instead of being an experience that favours the novice teacher's insertion into professional practice and their professional learning, as demanded by professional induction studies (Feiman-Nemser, 2003; Flores and Day, 2006), this process is usually configured as bureaucratic and standardised supervision focusing on compliance with previously established administrative, technical and curricular criteria. Thus, when recalling her role as a trainee civil servant, our participant remembers, on the one hand, the demand placed on her to fill out documents and record actions that had little impact on her professional learning and, on the other, the need to meet the objectives set out in her programme at the beginning of the course, regardless of the needs that might arise in the classroom: 'That year, I was under more pressure to finish the things I had in the project because I was going to have a visit from the inspector, so it was like ... whatever I had planned for that day, if she came, she shouldn't find me doing other things.'

Hence, in line with what other research indicates (Esteve, 2009; Marcelo, 2010), this type of assessment becomes a control mechanism that generates tension among novice teachers, as they are forced to prioritise administrative and bureaucratic demands over the real needs in the classroom. As a result, the possibilities for constructing a teacher identity based on professional autonomy and oriented towards educational innovation and a situated interpretation of professional practice were reduced when faced with an assessment model that reproduced institutional logic.

Therefore, as we have pointed out, during the first months of professional practice teachers experience a profound shock that generates great feelings of insecurity and frustration, causing them to question their competencies as teachers and straining their professional identity: 'The ideas I had in my head, so beautiful, so well-constructed ... there was a huge shock that frustrated me a lot.'

Our novice teacher's experience upon entering the real world has been widely documented in the literature on teacher socialisation, where it is referred to as 'reality shock' (Veenman, 1984), reflecting the difficulties encountered by novice teachers when trying to reconcile the knowledge acquired during initial education with the demands they encounter in practice.

Despite this, and in contrast to the functionalist perspective of teacher socialisation that is usually reflected in the specialised literature (Zeichner, 1985) – which frequently describes novice teachers as tending to abandon the theories explored during initial training as a form of survival (Pérez-Gómez and Pérez-Granados, 2013) – our participant does not reject the constructed theoretical knowledge, but rather redefines it as a source of professional development, relocating it in the complexity of the real classroom and incorporating the conflict and uncertainty inherent in practice as constitutive elements of her professional identity.

Indeed, as Pérez-Gómez (1997, 2010, 2023) documents in other works, to develop teachers' practical thinking and strengthen their professional identity, it is not enough to have constructed theoretically informed ideas and conceptions, which she calls 'practice theorisation', but also requires the inclusion and systematic repetition of ways of doing along with practices that allow one to 'experience theory', an aspect that can only be achieved in the real work space where the teacher operates. In this sense, we observed how, to incorporate herself into professional practice, the participant needed to undergo a process of readjustment and professional learning that, although initially marked by uncertainty and insecurity, soon allowed her to develop actions consistent with her professional thinking, approaching identity construction in an innovative way. In this regard, we found three fundamental elements that favoured this practical reconstruction of professional identity: (1) interprofessional coordination; (2) the revaluation of theoretical knowledge as a tool for empowerment and way to resist the socialising influence of the school culture; and (3) reflecting on practice through the development of action-research processes.

### **The identity construction of the innovative teacher in professional practice**

After the initial impact of joining the teaching profession, the participant begins a process of identity reconstruction marked by the search for coherence between her pedagogical thinking and her professional practice. In this process, the possibility of establishing professional coordination networks with other colleagues appears as one of the facilitating elements helping to mitigate the effects of the 'reality shock' she experienced at the beginning, enhancing her decision-making capacity and generating spaces for shared professional deliberation that allow reflective practice to develop:

We started those first few weeks organising our work a bit and started to see where we were coming from, that we had to see what kind of books we were doing, that we could do projects and ... when we saw that they were making proposals like that, we really started to say: come on, come on.

Thus, instead of conceiving teaching as a purely individual practice, our participant emphasises the importance of finding a group of colleagues with whom she could build a shared project to pursue improvement processes more consistent with the desire to transform the school and innovate. As she tells us:

Having people who share a bit of the path you want to take is essential because it's not the same as doing a project on your own in your class – you can do it, but it's not the same. Having someone who supports you means... you move forward on your own.

We observe how working with a group of people who conceived education in the same way allowed her to strengthen her own identity as a teacher and develop her professionalism, in line with the approaches of Hargreaves (2018), who believes that professionalism development requires joint planning, co-responsibility in designing the curriculum and shared assessment.

This finding is particularly relevant if, as evidenced by various authors (Benítez-Notario et al., 2025; Bolívar, 2018; Bolívar and Bolívar-Ruano, 2016; Lavié, 2004), we consider that individualistic culture still persists in school institutions and that peer work often takes the form of superficial collaboration (Semiao et al., 2022) that can perpetuate conservative structures (Krichesky and Murillo, 2018). In contrast, our participant's experience is in line with findings of other studies, such as that by Fernández-Larragueta and Rodorigo (2016), who argue that when teachers work as a team, not only does their effectiveness improve, allowing them to share responsibilities and tasks, but there is also a considerable increase in the development of their professionalism and the implementation of reflection processes regarding their own practice; this is thanks to the feedback possibilities that arise when interacting with other colleagues, leading to shared learning. For this reason, various studies have highlighted the role of professional collaboration and coordination in making innovation possible in schools (Fernández-Larragueta and Rodorigo, 2016; Hargreaves, 2018; Krichesky and Murillo, 2018; Santos-Guerra, 2010).

However, for our participant, this process is not without conflict and tension. One of the aspects that emerged in the data analysis is the resistance to change expressed by other faculty members. Drawing on pedagogical knowledge grounded in tradition and experience, they question the innovative practices she introduces, generating feelings of insecurity and vulnerability that further strain her professional identity: 'There is a lot of insecurity when you feel like your work is being questioned ... When you try to move away from that traditional school, you are questioned a lot.'

As documented by the participant, the symbolic authority of teachers, especially that of the veterans, acts as a mechanism for reproducing hegemonic pedagogical practices, inhibiting the participant's desire for innovation. Thus, through interferences such as 'children have always learned to read this way', they attempt to delegitimise the teacher's innovative practices, appealing to a supposed effectiveness sustained by tradition. Indeed, attitudes and practices emerge within schools that constitute the traditional institutional resistance to change documented in multiple studies and reinforce the conservative culture of the school (Apple, 2019; Carbonell, 2014; Contreras-Domingo, 1987; Hargreaves, 2018; Imbernón, 2020; Pérez-Gómez, 1997, 2023; Pérez-Gómez and Soto-Gómez, 2022). This is not a trivial matter, as the professional thinking of novice teachers, theoretically enriched during their initial training, often deteriorates and simplifies as a result of the socialisation processes experienced during the first years of teaching (Pérez-Gómez, 1997), contributing to a process of deprofessionalisation. This circumstance has been widely recognised in functionalist studies of professional socialisation, which present the novice teacher as a passive player who yields to the prevailing culture. However, we observe in our participant's case that she does not yield to the dominant school culture models. According to the dialectical perspective of teacher socialisation, we see that, despite feelings of insecurity, teachers manage to display forms of resistance against the hegemonic culture by relying on the theoretical knowledge built during their initial training (Giroux, 2018), which is seen as an argumentative framework for justifying and legitimising their professional actions, although relocating them within the framework of real work contexts: 'The main goal is for the children to learn, and ... with this approach to teaching, they learn. I'm certain that my children learn.'

Consequently, doubts will not arise because the theoretical knowledge built during initial training proves ineffective in practice, as other novice teachers often experience, but because it is impossible to learn a model of action before entering the classroom, as it is an essentially uncertain and unpredictable space. To assume theories would be sufficient for managing professional practice would neglect the important role played by teachers in deliberating about their own professional performance and about themselves.

As Bolívar (2018) points out, we can understand that teacher identities are constructed within the framework of specific contexts in which legitimacy, different forms of authority, and meanings regarding professional knowledge are resolved. The innovative teacher, by fracturing the dominant logic, thus becomes an object of suspicion. Hence, it becomes necessary to develop deep and contextualised pedagogical knowledge capable of maintaining a position of resistance over time against prevailing practices. In this sense, we have observed through the analysis of the interviews and documents provided by the teacher the importance she places on ongoing teacher education, linked to action-research processes and reflecting on practice. As Marcelo (2010) and Imbernón (2020) highlight, ongoing teacher training must be understood as a complex identity reconstruction process that leads one to question inherited ways of understanding the profession, rather than simply as technocratic insights that reduce training to the incorporation of new techniques or resources. In this regard, our participant states that ongoing teacher education helps her to critically review her own actions: 'For things that I know aren't going that way, I try to find tools to get them back on track.'

We can identify how her ongoing teacher education allows her to critically appropriate her professional knowledge, in accordance with the reflective professional idea developed by Schön (1998), which in turn strengthens her teaching identity by enabling her to connect her educational aspirations to professional practice. In this regard, the action-research group in which the teacher participates from the beginning of her professional career plays a fundamental role.

Thus, another key dimension in the construction of the innovative novice teacher's identity is expressed, which has to do with the co-construction of professional knowledge within a community. As Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1999) state, teaching knowledge is not transmitted vertically but is generated in the interaction between professionals who share a situated practice; therefore, action-research (Elliot, 2022) becomes a particularly effective means of professional development for teachers. Our participant experiences a strengthening of her professional identity, reflected in greater self-perceived empowerment and professional autonomy. This occurs through a dual pathway: on the one hand, contrasting her experiences with other teachers who share similar concerns and pedagogical reflection and, on the other, producing knowledge generated from experience (Elliot, 2022), which Pérez-Gómez and Soto-Gómez (2022) identify as 'practice theorisation' and 'theory experimentation'. This space allows one to reflect on one's own role in the classroom, 'to take ideas that haven't yet crossed your mind and put into practice those ideas that are clear to you'.

In this sense, we observe how her participation in the action-research group represents a turning point in the framework of her identity construction, consolidating a teaching position that moves away from hegemonic models and approaches an innovative conception of teaching.

## Conclusions

To summarise this article, in which we have addressed the construction of teacher identity among novice teachers with innovative traits, we present the main ideas that have emerged from the research.

First, it is clear that teacher identity construction begins when a future teacher is a child at school, a period during which the existence of a teaching model is primarily emphasised (Marcelo, 2010). However, as our case shows, the experience of a 'different school', far removed from the traditional model, decisively influenced the construction of a teacher identity with innovative features. Likewise, the existence of a professional role model who possessed innovative traits was significant; in our participant's case, this is her mother, a circumstance that increased the acceptance of this teaching model within her identity construction. The role that emotions play in developing theories and beliefs about the teacher's work is notable (Day, 2020), allowing these early experiences, which have a high emotional impact, to remain more or less stable over time. All of this reinforces the idea that professional teacher identity is constructed through personal, affective and academic dimensions, and that life references can act as catalysts for change, shaping predispositions towards innovative teaching practices.

Second, we emphasise the importance of initial education in rebuilding the identity of teachers with innovative traits. We have observed that, although entering professional practice poses novel problems for novice teachers (Schellings et al., 2021), acquiring skills during initial training allows them to understand the complex nature of the classroom, developing informed and critical thinking that questions the legitimacy of the hegemonic school model. An orientation towards educational innovation is crucial since it contributes to overcoming the 'reality shock', helping them to avoid being absorbed by the dominant school culture and favouring the development of innovation processes. Therefore, we stress the importance of rethinking teacher education policies, so that they allow future teachers to build relevant knowledge for facing the challenges posed by twenty-first-century schools, overcoming the inherited visions of the modern school, which maintain immobility in the teaching profession (Núñez, 2021). To this end, initial teacher education should be understood as a space for dialogue between the teachers' own beliefs and visions, theory and professional practice. Our research shows that its impact depends on the ability of teachers to connect with students' previous experiences and reconstruct their practical knowledge. However, as we stressed in the results discussion, constructing the identity of the novice teacher with innovative traits is a complex process, involving many other factors, and its development cannot be limited to the role played by initial teacher training.

Third, in line with the contributions made by current research (Hargreaves, 2018), it is evident how important the professional culture of schools is when it comes to incorporating novice teachers into professional practice and reconstructing their identity. Coordination and collaboration with colleagues are crucial for promoting innovative practices as well as for improving professional self-esteem and teacher satisfaction.

Fourth, we highlight the importance of lifelong learning for teachers in the ongoing process of constructing a teacher identity with innovative traits. In the participant's case, we appreciate the importance of the action-research group in which she participates and the processes of reflection on action, as these serve to transform uncritical practice into praxis, into theoretically informed action, adopting the position of a reflective professional (Schön, 1998) and acknowledging the importance of teachers researching their practice so as to develop innovation processes.

Finally, we wish to emphasise that the process of identity construction, or socialisation, of novice teachers with innovative traits transcends the mere gradual internalisation of institutional norms and values; rather, it constitutes a conflictual, open process in which teachers develop their agency, while negotiating, resisting or redefining prevailing school discourses and practices. Hence, teacher socialisation does not necessarily require one to adapt to the hegemonic school culture; it can also lead to transformative processes that promote the emergence of teacher identities with innovative traits.

Although the construction of teacher and novice teacher identity has been widely addressed, little research has been done on how novice teachers – those who are able to resist and confront the hegemonic discourses and practices that promote their uncritical socialisation – manage to construct and sustain their identity. Thus, our study is situated in a field that has been under-researched, as it is not limited to answering the question of how one becomes a teacher, increasing the scientific corpus on the construction of novice teacher identity. The main contribution and novelty of our research lie in analysing how novice teachers with innovative traits specifically construct their teacher identity, and in investigating how the construction of their professional identity allows them to resist and not be absorbed by the hegemonic school culture, resignifying and transforming the dominant logics of the school, even in the most vulnerable moments of their professional career. Hence, the implications for practice derived from the preliminary study findings point to the need for initial and ongoing teacher education to promote spaces for critical reflection where teachers can confront their beliefs, develop their own pedagogical thinking and strengthen an innovative professional identity capable of resisting processes of uncritical socialisation. They also highlight the importance of promoting real collaboration dynamics among teachers – especially in the early years of practice – that recognise the novice teachers' agency and offer them concrete support to sustain transformative practices even in institutional cultures resistant to change.

As for the limitations of this research, we can mention the access restrictions imposed by the centre, which made it difficult to carry out classroom observations; this would have allowed for a more in-depth comparison of the discourse and professional practice.

In terms of future research, it would be interesting to extend the analysis to other teachers at different stages of their careers or in different school contexts, so that commonalities and singularities can be identified in the identity construction and educational innovation processes.

## Declarations and conflicts of interest

### Research ethics statement

The authors conducted the research reported in this article in accordance with British Educational Research Association guidelines.

### Consent for publication statement

The authors declare that research participants' informed consent to publication of findings – including any personal or identifiable information – was secured prior to publication.

### Conflicts of interest statement

The authors declare no conflicts of interest with this work. All efforts to sufficiently anonymise the authors during peer review of this article have been made. The authors declare no further conflicts with this article.

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