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**DEREGULATION AND INTERNAL DIFFERENTIATION IN
TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL GROUPS: A CASE STUDY**

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Abstract

As a profession, teachers, as well as physicians or lawyers, used to be one of the most traditional and identifiable groups in modern Western societies. This paper uses data from an exploratory piece of research to point to the ways in which the educational system's growing deregulation and diversification impinges upon the composition of the professional category of teachers. In the Spanish formal educational system, a particular kind of training programme aimed at young people with a history of school failure is the most deregulated educational modality. This paper offers a description of the sociodemographic

and professional profile of teachers in those schemes. The data suggest that this professional group is very heterogeneous, mainly in terms of their working conditions, and that its internal differentiation is linked to emergent educational policies. It concludes that our teachers can be regarded, in the educational field, as an example of a more general process of internal differentiation within socioprofessional categories that emerges alongside the growing deregulation and of labour markets and the deterioration of working conditions.

Summary.

The project in which this piece of research is framed aims to analyze the ways in which teachers and trainers' own work experiences and vocational identities shape their educational practice as well as their students' vocational identities. A particular kind of educational program, the Social Guarantee Schemes [SGS], was chosen as the context of research.

The SGS are relatively new training programs for young people with a history of school failure. Although these schemes are regulated by the Spanish general law of compulsory education, they show many features that are typical of vocational training taking place outside the formal educational system: public funding for each has to be applied for year after year by the organizations managing it. There is a variety of different institutions offering and managing the schemes (local governments, non-profit organizations, secondary schools); their formal requirements and their curriculum are very loosely defined; and there is no qualification awarded at the end of these schemes. Given that different educational programs and levels are subject to different degrees of formal regulation, the SGS are the most deregulated modality in the Spanish formal educational system.

Our hypothesis was that such deregulation would shape SGS teachers' and trainers' vocational identities in ways that would be very different from the vocational identities of teachers in more traditional, strictly regulated levels of the educational system. In order to compile an initial description of the sociodemographic, educational and professional profile of this professional group, a questionnaire assessing those aspects was administered to one-third of the teachers and trainers of the SGS in course in the Valencian region in 2000-2001. Our representative sample is composed of 84 educators teaching basic school subjects and 74 trainers delivering vocational training in the scheme.

Above all our data show the great internal heterogeneity within this professional group. There are remarkable interindividual differences in the teachers' educational and professional careers. Those differences are more pronounced among vocational trainers than among educators teaching basic subjects. This finding can be attributed to the fact that the qualifications required for the latter role are explicitly regulated, in contrast with the qualifications required for the role of trainer. Differences in working conditions, such as type of contract or wages, are also remarkable and are linked to the kind of organization managing the scheme. Whereas public secondary schools have very stable, well-paid

workers, non-profit organizations employ to deliver SGS younger teachers and trainers with shorter and more precarious contracts. Internal differences among workers of the same organization are also apparent, mainly among those working for local governments.

Our preliminary conclusions suggest that a distinctive homogeneous vocational identity in SGS' teachers and trainers may not be found. The high levels of deregulation, flexibility and precariousness affecting this part of the educational system produce a large degree of heterogeneity and internal differentiation within the socioprofessional category of teachers and trainers. These findings are discussed in relation to segmentation processes linked that are linked to labour market deregulation. It is suggested that, instead of focusing on the professional group as a whole, the notion of professional segments could be a more promising tool with which to approach the analysis of teachers' vocational identities.

Deregulation and internal differentiation in teachers' professional groups: a case study

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The research project deals with *vocational identities construction in Social Guarantee Schemes*. Our main research question is the following:

What is the influence of teachers' vocational identities upon

- their educational practice, and
- their students' vocational identities

THE RESEARCH CONTEXT

Social Guarantee Schemes [SGS]:

They are training program whose objective is:

- to provide a professional qualification
- at a level 1 to 16 to 25 year-old youth
- with a history of school failure

The main features of SGS are the following:

- although regulated by Spanish law of compulsory education, they are the *most deregulated modality* in Spanish formal educational system
- there are *two curriculum areas*: compensatory school education and professional specialized training
- there are *two different teachers*: a schoolteacher and a vocational trainer
- there is a *variety of institutions running the schemes*: local government, non-profit organizations, secondary schools

The initial task of our research consisted of approaching the analysis of SGS teachers' vocational identities. The variables we presumed that might have an influence upon teachers' vocational identities were the following:

- Sociodemographic variables: sex, age, etc.
- Educational background: academic qualifications
- Educational role played within the scheme: schoolteacher vs. Trainer
- Kind of employing organization: local government, non-profit organization, secondary school
- Working conditions: quality of contract, professional career

Our basic assumption at this point was the following:

In such a deregulated modality, a wide variety of teachers' vocational identities will be found

The objective of this paper is therefore to analyze internal differentiation within this professional group as regards professional profile and working conditions, i.e.:

- quality of contract: stability and wages
- associative practices and affiliation
- professional career

THE SAMPLE

N= 179 [44% of teachers working in SGS in the Valencian region during 2000-2001]

The educational role played within the scheme was as follows:

- 48.6% (N=84) are schoolteachers
- 42.8% (N=74) are vocational trainers

The kind of employing organization is:

- 50% (N=84) work for local government

- 22% (N=37) work for non-profit organization
- 11.9% (N=20) work for public secondary school
- 16.1% (N=27) work for publicly funded private secondary school

The research instrument that we built and used consisted of a questionnaire collecting information on the following areas:

- professional specialty for which the scheme qualifies
- sociodemographic, educational and professional profile of educators and trainers
- kind of organization running the scheme and human resource management strategies

The procedure of analysis consisted of searching for:

- professional profile and working conditions of teachers related by means of contingency analyses to:
 - o sociodemographic and educational variables
 - o kind of employing organization
 - o educational role played within the scheme
- professional profile and working conditions:
 - o Quality of contract [*=stability and wages*]
 - o Associative practices [*=affiliation to trade union*]
 - o Professional career [*=mobility, previous experience as educator and context in which it was acquired*]

THE RESULTS

1. Quality of the contract:

1.1. Stability:

66% have a short-term contract

28% have a long-term contract

As related to sociodemographic profile:

- Younger teachers have more precarious contracts
- Women have more precarious contracts

As related to employing organization:

- Teachers in secondary schools have stable contracts
- Teachers in local and non-profit organizations have short-term contracts

As related to educational role

- No differences between schoolteachers and vocational trainers

1.2. Wages:

80% earn under 1200 euros/month

40% earn 600 to 900 euros/month

As related to sociodemographic profile:

- Younger teachers earn lower wages

As related to employing organization:

- Teachers in public secondary schools earn highest wages
- Teachers in non-profit organizations earn lowest wages

As related to educational role:

- Schoolteachers earn more than vocational trainers

As related to stability of contract:

- Teachers with a long-term contract earn more than those with a short-term contract

2. Work related asociacionism:

25% belong to a trade union

18% belong to a professional association

As related to sociodemographic profile:

- Older teachers belong to trade unions in a far higher proportion than younger ones

As related to employing organization:

- No differences in work-related asociacionism

As related to educational role:

- Schoolteachers are more likely to be affiliated to a trade union than vocational trainers

As related to working conditions:

- Teachers with a long-term contract and a higher income are more likely to belong to a trade union than those with a short-term contract and a lower wage

3. Professional career

3.1. *Mobility:*

The average amount of different contracts during working life is 5.5 (SD=4.96)

As related to sociodemographic profile:

- Oldest and youngest teachers have had less different contracts than those who are 36 to 50 years old

- Women have had more different contracts than men

As related to employing organization:

- No differences in mobility

As related to educational role:

- No differences in mobility

As related to working conditions:

- Teachers with a short-term contract and those with lower wages have had more different contracts than those with a long-term contract and those with higher wages

3.2. Educational work experience:

80% had previous educational work experience

33% had previous educational work experience in a school context

45% had previous educational work experience in non-formal VET programs

Data suggest there are two distinguishable professional careers in education: those who have work experience in a school context are less likely to have worked in a non-formal VET program, and those who acquired their work educational experience in a non-formal context are less likely to have worked for a school ($\chi^2=18.720$; $p=0.001$)

As related to employing organization:

- Teachers in public or private secondary schools are more likely to have had previous educational work experience in a school context

As related to educational role:

- Schoolteachers are more likely to have had previous educational work experience in a school context than vocational trainers

As related to working conditions:

- Teachers with a long-term contract are more likely to have worked for a school before and teachers with a short-term contract are more likely to have worked in a non-formal VET program

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Data show the picture of a fragmented and segmented professional group in terms of several parameters affecting vocational identities.

In such a deregulated work context, there are:

- low levels of professional associationism
- a remarkable heterogeneity in working conditions
- readily distinguishable professional careers

Therefore, a wide variety in vocational identities within this group should be expected.

None of the factors of internal differentiation is associated to academic background.

This suggests that, as deregulation grows in educational contexts, people that perform the same job and hold identical qualifications could construct quite different vocational identities.

Job stability, wage, career mobility and trade-union affiliation are intercorrelated variables.

Therefore, as regards working conditions, internal differentiation within this professional group can be described in terms of an internal gradient.

Some of the factors that increase the likelihood of having better working conditions in the SGS are suggestive of the traditional vocational identity of a teacher:

- working for a secondary school
- acting as a schoolteacher

- having developed professional career in a school context
- being older than 50
- being male

Some of the factors associated with worse working conditions and lack of professional affiliation in the SGS are suggestive of emergent vocational identities:

- working for a non-profit organization
- acting as a vocational trainer
- having developed professional career in a non-formal educational context
- being younger than 35
- being female