

Identity Preconceptions of Aspiring Teachers in a High School Pedagogy Program in the city of Santiago de Chile

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Abstract. The objective of this article is to characterize the set of beliefs, emotions, and perspectives about the educational process, expressed in the identity preconfigurations of the teaching profession of the student cohort who applied to a Middle Pedagogy Program in 2019. For this purpose, their answers were analyzed from two instruments applied to the candidates in the application stage, in order to determine their entry profile and provide support during the formative phase, concluding that the identity preconfigurations determine to a great extent the formative trajectory of the future teachers and constitute key tropes for their future actions at the level of practices and knowledge that frame and give meaning to their own professional practice.

Keywords: Identity, Teaching Profession; Case Study; Initial Training.

1 Introduction

Studies on identity preconceptions in the teaching profession are necessary if it is considered that these preconfigurations can act as barriers to the shaping of professional identity (Cantón & Tardif, 2018) and their neglect would be expressed in the precarious level of reflection about knowledge and teaching work evidenced by pedagogy graduates in Chile (Ruffinelli, 2018). Thus, studying professional identity in the early stages is necessary in order to determine an entry profile and offer support throughout the formative trajectory.

Theoretical Framework

This work assumes the constructivist conception of the concept of Professional Teacher Identity, worked in Chile by Avalos and Sotomayor (2012), and which is expressed in

a set of beliefs, emotions, and attitudes that define the identity of a teacher. In this regard, the theory recognizes that these components are developed in an aspiring teacher from his or her training stage and continue to be projected throughout his or her professional life.

An aspiring teacher carries a set of beliefs, emotions and attitudes that are anchored in individual and collective processes that are linked to family and school experiences (Cantón & Tardif, 2018) prior to professional training, which are not only determinant in the choice of pedagogical studies, but also in the conceptions and perspectives about teaching and learning with which aspiring teachers enter.

In this context, there is a need for initial training to take into account the previous experiences of the learners, since the evidence shows that they do not show an orientation to adequately develop teaching skills upon graduation from the training institutions (Gaete, Gómez & Bascopé, 2016).

2 Method

2.1 Sample Subsection

To characterize and analyze the identity preconceptions brought by prospective teachers at the beginning of their studies, the pre-configurations of a cohort of students who pursued pedagogical studies in a Middle Pedagogy Program during the year 2019 were studied. The sample consisted of a total of 37 students, which represents 100% of the cohort.

The qualitative methodology was implemented through a case study of intrinsic nature (Stake, 1998; Yin, 2018), based on the application of two instruments that operationalize the concept of Professional Identity, a written questionnaire consisting of a total of four open-ended questions was used. In these questions, the candidates provide insight into their initial motivations for studying pedagogy (beliefs-emotions), the existence of biographical backgrounds explaining their orientation towards teaching (emotions), conceptions of how they believe high school students learn (beliefs), and challenges that presenting a diverse classroom poses for a teacher (beliefs-emotions; stances towards the educational phenomenon). The second instrument is a pedagogical case in which they are asked to assume the role of a teacher facing the case, and design and justify action proposals to address characteristics of a diverse classroom. These proposals serve as a means to trace their beliefs, emotions, and perspectives on the educational phenomenon as central axes. The collected information was analyzed using content analysis (Gibbs, 2019). The overall research framework is as follows:

Table No. 1

General Matrix of research dimensions and categories

Dimensions	Categories
<i>1. Beliefs</i> Set of preconceptions about the reasons for studying pedagogy and the characteristics of this profession.	Expectations Characteristics of teaching practice
<i>2. Emotions</i> Set of experiences, both individual and social, that exhibit an emotional component that influences one's inclination towards pedagogy, as well as emotions related to teaching.	Biographical component Valuation
<i>3. Positioning towards the Educational Process</i> Set of preconceptions which determines positions regarding the teaching-learning process and challenges to teachers' work.	Reproductive view Critical view

3 Results

Regarding the Beliefs dimension and its categories, it is noteworthy that many aspiring teachers hold expectations associated with the importance of education as a catalyst for social change. They view teaching as an isolated rather than shared work, favoring proposals that focus on pedagogical aspects over disciplinary ones, and emphasizing the student and his or her uniqueness.

Regarding the Emotions dimension and its categories, significant biographical elements were investigated from where aspiring teachers anchor their relationship with teaching, which were expressed in emotional evaluations to assume pedagogical studies.

Finally, for the dimension of positioning towards the educational process and its categories, the cohort evidenced to have a critical view oriented to make differences visible and to understand them as an opportunity to generate significant and pertinent learning to the learning contexts, recognizing and problematizing in turn the importance of being a teacher knowledgeable of the reality in which he or she is inserted.

4 Discussion

Regarding beliefs and expectations, it is significant that the main reason given is to contribute to the social transformations of the country, thus recognizing a political-

ideological positioning expressed in an identity preconfiguration associated with the student and social movements that culminated the second decade of the 21st century (Bellei, Cabalin & Orellana, 2014). In relation to a rather isolated teaching exercise, focused on the singularity of the student, it is to be understood as a result of what Marcelo (2001) refers to as "learning by observation." This approach arises from a prolonged exposure to teachers who have an isolated professional culture, and where seeking help is frowned upon.

In relation to Emotions/Biographic, the results show an orientation to teaching based on emotions inscribed in a family biography (Tardif, 2004) and from which positive memories operate towards family teachers, and in a school biography in which the schools and teachers' styles can also serve as triggers in favor of teaching (Cantón & Tardif, 2004). Regarding Emotions and Valuation, emotional factors play a significant role in the decision to become a teacher. This is explained from positive emotions experienced during the applicants' school stage (Chong, Low, & Goh, 2011; Jarauta & Pérez, 2017).

When it comes to the educational phenomenon, traditional conceptions about teaching and learning tend to the teacher's role, with little consideration given to the students, as various studies have shown (Serrano & Pontes, 2016). However, there is a discursivity that manifests a positioning supported by a broader sociocultural perspective of what the teaching task means.

5 Conclusions

It can be concluded that identity preconfigurations determine to a great extent the formative trajectory of future teachers and constitute key tropes for their actions both at the level of practices and the knowledge that shapes and gives meaning to their professional practice.

From this perspective, the results highlight the need for the studied program to provide support in order to remove those teacher preconceptions that are not consistent with the formative guidelines derived from public policy (MBE and Initial Training Standards) and that are expressed in the definition of practical teaching experiences of a relational and collaborative nature.

6 Limitations and future research

In the training and development of the teaching profession, it is crucial to acknowledge the social impact that pedagogy holds for aspiring educators. Graduates who are drawn to pedagogy must recognize the expectation of social change that comes with the profession. In addition to that, it should be considered that the research studied a one-year continuing education program, and the population involved possesses knowledge that may not necessarily be replicable in regular teacher training programs.

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