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Trainee teachers' self-perceptions about their teaching role and job performance

Autopercepciones del profesor en formación sobre su rol docente y desempeño laboral

Auto-percepções dos professores estagiários sobre o seu papel pedagógico e desempenho profissional

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ABSTRACT

Self-perceptions about teaching abilities are an important factor to examine the way in which academic processes take place at university level. In this context, the objective of this research was to analyze trainee-teachers' perceptions, in the last year of their degree, about their training process and the acquisition of strategies to face labor insertion. The research corresponds to a descriptive study, based on a qualitative approach. The sample was intentional non-probabilistic, consisting of 37 Chilean pedagogy students. Information was collected through a questionnaire prepared on a digital platform. In correspondence with the thematic content of the open answers, the categories of academic training, training for working life and teaching role were analyzed. The main results focus on the strengths identified by the student-teachers about themselves: didactic and disciplinary aspects, communicative skills, pedagogical vocation, and integral formation. Little practical experience and classroom management have been identified as some of the weaknesses. Although positive feelings such as trust and commitment or the development of strategies stand out, the findings reveal self-perceptions with a negative value, such fears and concerns related to effective problem-solving skills, employability, job insertion meeting others' expectations their teaching role.

Keywords: professional performance; teacher training; communication skills; labor insertion; pedagogical vocation.

RESUMEN

Las autopercepciones sobre las capacidades docentes constituyen un importante factor para examinar la forma en que se lleva a cabo el proceso académico de estudiantes universitarios. En este contexto, el objetivo de esta investigación fue analizar las percepciones de profesores en formación de

último año de la carrera, respecto a su proceso formativo y de la adquisición de estrategias para enfrentarse al mundo laboral. La investigación corresponde a un estudio de tipo descriptivo, con base en un enfoque cualitativo. La muestra fue no probabilística intencional, constituida por 37 estudiantes chilenos de pedagogía. La recolección de información se realizó mediante un cuestionario elaborado en una plataforma digital. En correspondencia con el contenido temático de las respuestas abiertas, se analizaron las categorías formación académica, formación para la vida laboral y rol docente. Los principales resultados se centran en las fortalezas identificadas por los profesores en formación sobre sí mismos; entre ellas: desarrollo de aspectos didácticos y disciplinares, manejo comunicativo, vocación pedagógica y formación integral. Entre las debilidades del proceso se evidencia la falta de experiencia práctica y el poco dominio de grupo. Si bien se destacan sentimientos positivos como la confianza y compromiso o el desarrollo de estrategias, los hallazgos evidencian autopercepciones con valoración negativa, como la presencia de miedos y aprensiones asociados a la efectiva resolución de problemas, a la empleabilidad e inserción laboral y al cumplimiento de las expectativas que otros tienen respecto de su rol docente.

Palabras clave: desempeño profesional; formación docente; habilidad comunicativa; inserción laboral; vocación pedagógica.

RESUMO

A autopercepção das capacidades de ensino é um factor importante para examinar a forma como o processo académico dos estudantes universitários é levado a cabo. Neste contexto, o objectivo desta investigação era analisar as percepções dos professores estagiários do último ano relativamente ao seu processo de formação e à aquisição de estratégias para enfrentar o mundo do trabalho. A investigação corresponde a um estudo descritivo, baseado numa abordagem qualitativa. A amostra era não-probabilística e intencional, constituída por 37 professores estudantes chilenos. A informação foi recolhida por meio de um questionário elaborado numa plataforma digital. De acordo com o conteúdo temático das respostas abertas, foram analisadas as categorias de formação académica, formação para a vida profissional e papel docente. Os principais resultados concentram-se nos pontos fortes identificados pelos professores estagiários sobre si próprios, incluindo: desenvolvimento de aspectos didácticos e disciplinares, capacidades de comunicação, vocação pedagógica e formação abrangente. Entre as fraquezas do processo está a falta de experiência prática e o controlo deficiente do grupo. Embora se destaquem sentimentos positivos como confiança e empenho ou o desenvolvimento de estratégias, os resultados revelam autopercepções com avaliações negativas, tais como a presença de receios e apreensões associadas à resolução eficaz de problemas, empregabilidade e colocação no emprego, e a realização das expectativas que outros têm em relação ao seu papel docente.

Palavras-chave: desempenho profissional; formação de professores; capacidades de comunicação; empregabilidade; vocação docente.

INTRODUCTION

Teacher training entails a complex process that involves not only the development of disciplinary and pedagogical areas, but fundamentally the exercise of essential skills for the consolidation of professional vocation and preparation for the world of work. However, despite the efforts made by higher

education institutions, many students have not fully developed the skills necessary to adequately insert themselves in an educational establishment or, in other cases, do not feel prepared to start their lives as teacher and assume the challenges that are their own, since certain insecurities that involve both the individual and social dimensions become latent. In this scenario, it is essential to analyze self-perceptions, since they constitute an instance not only for knowledge, but also for the continuous improvement of processes. Self-perception is the set of assessments that a person has of himself in a field of action and at a given time (Ramírez and Barragán, 2018). For the purposes of this research, self-perception is understood as the capacity of the teacher in training to perceive himself with respect to his personal characteristics, abilities, qualities, weaknesses, apprehensions and limits associated with the teaching role and his future professional performance.

It is a very common fact that teachers in training become fully aware of their strengths and weaknesses when they are *about* to finish their university studies, with the role of teacher already consolidated; however, it has been suggested that reflection on their training process should arise in the first years of university, so that, in this way, remedial strategies can be determined in the event that any weakness is identified. In this regard, Asensio and Ruiz (2017) highlight that the first perceptions about the teaching process arise at the beginning of teacher training, that is, when the predominant role corresponds to the student. Their beliefs, in this sense, arise on the basis of their learning and involve the development of transversal skills.

The perceptions related to training as a teacher are based on the search for learning that would later allow a transfer to the classroom. At the same time, they highlight the importance of developing the necessary

skills to interrelate with their immediate environment and with the educational establishment in which they will be inserted. For Rojas *et al.* (2018), skills represent an elementary aspect in the learning of future teachers and in the development of classroom teaching. According to the authors, it is essential to promote the development of the temporal location skill, so that "primary teachers can understand the past, understand the present and project the future, with modes of action consistent with social demands" (p. 79). Factors such as effective communication, dialogue, consolidation of strategies, confidence in learning, commitment to the training of their students, among others, constitute a solid foundation that supports the process of preparing for the world of work.

In this frame of reference that supports the problem. Medina *et al.* (2021) maintains that initial teacher training "imposes academic and scientific challenges based on their preparation to introduce changes in their professional activity, in which the development of professional pedagogical skills occupies an essential place and a challenge for the pedagogical groups of the universities" (p. 922). Therefore, the various challenges that teachers must overcome are directly linked to the professional skills expected at the end of the training and that are a reflection of their graduation profile. Regardless of what it is pursued, the evaluation made by the teacher in training is not always consistent only with the strengths that he perceives of himself, but are consistent with the existence of weaknesses. Sometimes, they constitute an element that hinders their performance, but, in others, they refer to instances of constant improvement and improvement of teaching practices.

In the first assumption, the weakness would be a component that limits their attitudes and expectations regarding the teaching

role, to the extent that it would emphasize the limitations of the job placement process, a fact that would further accentuate the insecurities inherent in training and how skilled you feel at solving problems. This is where the problems associated with employability arise and how their professional performance could be. Probably, already informed about the possible problems faced by some novice teachers (Iglesias and Southwell, 2020; Ruffinelli, 2013), he projects this insecurity onto himself. However, other teachers in training will notice that success does not always depend on the preparation provided by the university, but on the skills developed. This idea is endorsed by Solís *et al.* (2016), who highlight that the success of beginning teachers will be subject to "their abilities to know the school institution and overcome the difficulties they encounter, regardless of the preparation that the training institution has given them or the support he receives from the school where he works" (p. 203).

In the second assumption, the weakness is conceived as a manifestation of the analysis carried out by the teacher regarding his practices, of the gaps that exist in his academic training at the university and, from there, he uses the necessary strategies to overcome such limitations. Whatever the case, the way in which situations are faced is directly linked, on the one hand, to the personal characteristics involved and, on the other, to the identity aspects of the institution that accompanies the teacher in training until graduation. According to Sánchez and Jara (2018), in "the encounter or disagreement of the cognitive and ethical dimensions; professional and personal, the identity production of teachers is configured, having a particular importance when defining the nature of teaching work" (pp. 248-249). In other words, identity is directly connected to how to respond to the requirements of the external environment and, at the same time, makes effective problem solving possible.

Apart from identity, how the vocational factor is consolidated or manifested emerges as a central aspect of the teacher's self-perception. According to Mujica and Orellana (2018), this component acquires great importance in training processes and in those that pertain to continuous training, given that "to opt for the teaching profession there is no regulation that refers to the presence or absence of vocation, as (in) qualifying to study or pursue a pedagogical career" (p. 207). A similar approach is that of Méndez and Conde (2018), who point out that in the implementation of teaching work, it is expected, among other things, that there be help for students and, in addition, that a pedagogical vocation be transmitted. This concept refers to the way in which the work will be carried out once they have graduated from the university and represents a constant call towards the generation of various instances for the achievement of learning.

Finally, it should be noted that, along with skills, there are professional skills that are gradually established from the first years of teacher training. One of them is communicative competence, which, for Pompa and Pérez (2015), is not only oriented "to creating a pleasant and assertive climate in the teaching process, but also directly affects the preparation of individuals for life." (p. 165). Another competence is collaborative work, which is conceived as a didactic strategy for strengthening the social skills of teachers. The findings of Cadavieco *et al.* (2016), in effect, consider the acquisition of this competence favorable for the teaching profession. Given the challenges that this study shows, collaborative work emerges as an important strategy to improve the quality of learning (Perlado *et al.,* 2019) and, at the same time, to strengthen the professional security of the teacher in training, who will understand that If you participate with others in the process, important skills for shared learning and

collaborative problem solving will be developed.

Given the context presented, the objective of this research was to analyze the perceptions of teachers in training in the last year of their career regarding their training process and the acquisition of strategies to face the world of work.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This research corresponds to a descriptive study based on a qualitative approach (Méndez and Conde, 2018), which allows deepening the perceptions of future basic education teachers. The methodology used considered an analysis of thematic content (Gibbs, 2012), based on the emerging textual corpus of the open responses and the consequent survey of categories. This study is carried out in the context of the plan of curricular strategies carried out within the career to strengthen the timely degree of the student body.

The selected sample was of an intentional non-probabilistic type (Otzen and Manterola, 2017), made up of 37 pedagogy students belonging to the Faculty of Education of a university in the Biobío Region, Chile. The average age of the student group is 25 years. All the participants are in their last academic semester; therefore, they are on the *verge* of obtaining their professional degree as a teacher of basic education, with one of the three mentions of the study plan.

The applied instrument was a questionnaire elaborated through the digital platform Google Forms. It consisted of seven open questions, which allowed a qualitative analysis based on the perception of the participating students. The questions were decided by the researchers, based on the existing bibliography and on the research

purposes. In order to determine the acceptability of the questions, a content validation was carried out through expert judgment, who evaluated the level of acceptability of the questions and provided suggestions that were considered in the questionnaire. Table 1 presents the questions of the instrument.

Table 1- Constitutive questions of the applied instrument

No.	Quiz questions
1	What are the most relevant skills developed throughout your professional training?
2	What are for you the main decisions you had to make in the training process?
3	What are, in your opinion, the key factors to feel fully prepared for the world of work?
4	*Ad portas* of being an educator, in what aspects do you feel stronger academically?
5	What are the main weaknesses that you perceive of yourself to face the world of work?
6	What fears or apprehensions do you have related to your future teaching role?
7	What strategies would you put into practice to remedy the weaknesses you perceive in your academic training?

For the data analysis process, a triangulation of the information was carried out based on three essential components: the researchers' interpretation, based on their experiences in the educational field; the existing frame of reference regarding the academic trajectory and employability, and the perceptions of teachers in training, analyzed from the explicit discourses. In order to safeguard the ethical standards of research, the participants signed an informed consent stating their voluntary participation in the study and ensuring the confidentiality of their responses.

RESULTS

In correspondence with the thematic content of the open responses (Gibbs, 2012), three categories of analysis emerge. The first refers to the academic training of teachers in training, the second deals with training for working life and the third is related to the teaching role. Table 2 details this information.

Table 2 - Study categories and subcategories.

Category 1	Subcategories	Description
Academic training	1. Strengths 2. Weaknesses	Ability to analyze the strengths and weaknesses related to their academic training at the University.
Category 2	**Subcategories**	**Description**
Training for working life	1. Trust and commitment 2. Use of strategies	Self-perceptions regarding those strengths entrenched in university education, important to face working life as a teacher.
Category 3	**Subcategories**	**Description**
teaching role	1. Fears and apprehensions 2. Challenges	Discovery of those factors that are felt as weaknesses or aspects to improve for optimal teaching performance.

In order to guarantee confidentiality in the delivery of information, the acronym EP (Student of Pedagogy) is used, followed by a correlative random number (1-37). In this way, the coding for the introduction of the informants' speeches is obtained. The main findings are analyzed and discussed below.

CATEGORY 1. Perceptions about academic training

For teachers, perceptions regarding university academic training are oriented towards the consolidation of relevant learning that would later be extrapolated to the classroom. The evaluation that is carried out allows us to distinguish both the strengths and the weaknesses that, in themselves, refer to instances of constant improvement and that are part of the identity, related to their academic training at the University. Below are the emerging subcategories and a description of the main focuses of attention.

Strengths

Development of didactic and disciplinary aspects

Those aspects associated with a strong validation of oneself and of the institution that accredits them before society are constituted as strengths in the academic field. The informants of this study highlight the importance of disciplinary training for the primary education educator, especially if it implies an integral development from the mention. Along with this, they highlight the value of training in didactics, especially for the design of practical and contextualized activities.

According to the first point, the data shows the need for training to provide them with the tools to function effectively in their future workplaces. This is how one of the participants expresses it by indicating that "the university must train the student to respond to educational needs. Personally, I feel prepared when planning and I have the tools to hold a class and work as a team with my establishment colleagues" (EP-32).

Regarding disciplinary training, pedagogy students declare the existence of guidelines that allow them to consolidate learning and, at the same time, use it in the development of their classes. Such guidelines are connected with the curricular and good teaching frameworks that all teachers in training must handle. In this regard, one of the informants points out that "in the learning of his discipline it is very important to plan, especially in the area of contextualizing teaching based on the reality of the students" (EP-17). This idea is reaffirmed by the participating group, who highlights the use of innovative resources to carry out teaching: "a mandatory aspect, which should not be missing in planning, is the creation of fun and attractive activities for students" (EP-2).

Communicative management

Another of the strengths that is declared as an inherent characteristic of academic training is that referred to communicative competence and the proper use of the language in interaction with others in the classroom and in the common spaces of the educational establishment. This factor is, from the perspective of the participants, a crucial tool for the efficient performance of teachers in training, in their relationship within the university, in educational establishments, in interventions with their students and in daily communications. In this sense, its proper use allows opening spaces for socialization, learning and assertive decision-making.

The expositions exposed are embodied in several speeches. A fragment refers that "communicative management in the classroom is key to generating a good environment for learning" (EP-34). A similar discourse points out that, "thanks to good communication, the teachers made the information easy to understand, which is essential in a pedagogy career" (EP-11).

Another informant reinforces the decisive nature of communication: "as future teachers we need to train ourselves for the development of dialogue and communication, since it is a key to the resolution of different situations" (EP-23). The value of communicative management and its projection in the workplace is also highlighted: "University academic training reinforces constructive dialogue and good communication with my teachers, classmates and parents" (EP-30).

Pedagogical vocation

The data collected on the strengths of academic training show that teachers attach great importance to the pedagogical vocation, when carrying out university studies and projecting their professional future. A large part of the informants refers to this factor as a trait that defines a good teacher in training: "the most important thing to study this career is to show dedication to each new challenge" (EP-9), "I entered this career of pedagogy because I have a vocation for teaching" (EP-14) and "it is essential that students who are trained as teachers have a strong pedagogical vocation to contribute to the children of tomorrow" (EP-18).

In relation to the above, some study participants connect the pedagogical vocation with the search for effective strategies for learning, as shown below: "My vocation is teaching children and for them I am willing to continue developing new strategies and skills" (EP-27), "a teacher with a vocation takes great care in how to adapt knowledge to different situations" (EP-36). This same point of view is shared by the following pedagogy student: "I have strengthened my vocation to be a basic teacher, that entails being able to learn to know the students, seek different strategies for teaching and work collaboratively" (EP-32).

Integral formation

Throughout the training itinerary, the integral development of the student is established as a transversal and systematic purpose. In the case of this research, the students confirm this assumption and mention, precisely, that it is one of the main strengths associated with their academic training. The connections they make focus on the ability to apply all the knowledge acquired in the planning of a class and to promote significant learning in their students. In this sense, some participants point out that: "the diversity of teaching-learning strategies put into practice show an integral development of the teaching staff that allows generating changes in our students" (EP-8), "I feel strengthened in various pedagogical areas, as in the knowledge of strategies and skills for an effective teaching-learning process" (EP-26).

The comprehensive development referred to above considers not only disciplinary and pedagogical aspects, but also the value component represented in empathy, the ability to listen and social responsibility. Regarding the first value, one of the informants declares having understood throughout his training that, for optimal performance, it is necessary "to know the context of my students and from there generate empathy to deliver quality content, I highlight this because in the framework for good teaching says that the teacher is responsible for generating an environment conducive to learning" (EP-13).

Corresponding to empathy is the ability to listen, which is seen as a highly valued skill, necessary to carry out the different processes in the classroom, and as a strategy to put feedback into practice and improve student performance. In this regard, one of the speeches deepens this idea: "I know that the grades do not reflect what one is capable of doing in the classroom, therefore, I feel very prepared and strengthened in all areas, for example, in the knowledge of strategies and teaching resources. Above all, I feel well prepared to listen to my students and detect needs that require support" (EP-29).

Finally, it deepens into the fact that comprehensive training is an unavoidable condition to train as a trained educator who can face the world of work and be a contribution to society. Said contribution is expressed in the responsibility that falls to each citizen at an individual or group level and is projected to the impact generated by that educator in their immediate environment, specifically, in the educational environment. A speech that supports this postulate is: "my training has been completely comprehensive. I observe the path traveled with satisfaction, because I see growth in my disciplinary, didactic and value knowledge. This will be a contribution to my students and will mean a great social responsibility" (EP-5).

Weaknesses

The continuous improvements of the careers are the result of constant feedback carried out by the educational institutions and by their academic body. Self-assessment instances make it possible to analyze the perceptions of teachers in training regarding the skills acquired and those perceived weaknesses that would hinder their future work with students. The teaching staff attaches great importance to the practical experience acquired in their academic training process; however, the participants consider this a weakness that is related to disciplinary, pedagogical aspects, such as classroom control, group dominance, lack of knowledge about administrative aspects and strategies for addressing special educational needs.

Lack of practical experience

The self-perceptions of the informants make it possible to recognize as weaknesses the lack of practical experience and application of the knowledge acquired in educational establishments, as referred to in the following excerpt: "I consider a weakness of our training the little practical experience or the need for a greater emphasis on it, which was accentuated in the pandemic period by the closure of educational establishments" (EP-1). According to this speech, the arguments that support the lack of practical and concrete experience are due to external factors to academic training, such as the pandemic that has affected the world.

On the other hand, there are questions associated with the lack of experience itself, due to the fact that greater instances of approaching the world of work were not taken advantage of, such as, for example, assistantships, simulations, volunteering, among others. Some fragments that support these ideas are found in: "during my training there were certain gaps related to the lack of deepening from direct contact with children in schools" (EP-17), "after graduating I weighed how important it was to have more practice through participating in congresses or assistantships" (EP-4) and "I feel weak from my professional practice while I was training at the university, for different reasons" (EP-30).

The lack of knowledge and experience on administrative aspects of the establishments is also highlighted as a weakness. One of the arguments to justify this weakness focuses on the lack of experience with educational centers: "a shortcoming is not knowing how to handle administrative work, due to my little knowledge about the world of work" (EP-22). Another argument is in the lack of knowledge of the teaching reality: "The little knowledge of administrative aspects is a weakness, due to the superficial knowledge of the teaching work" (EP-31). Finally, an informant identifies deficient aspects that require improvement: "Lack of face-to-face experience, knowing how the establishments work and knowing more technical elements such as filling in the class book" (EP-32).

Classroom control or group domain

Another of the weaknesses declared by the participants in this study refers to the lack of strategies to control and manage the classroom, which is considered a very significant factor when carrying out the teaching-learning process. A student of pedagogy mentions that "to do the classes it is important to have knowledge of the discipline, but also strategies for the control of the course and this is something that I need to develop" (EP-15). Another participant emphasizes that this lack of strategies is due more to personal motivations than to failures of the institution in this sense: "A weakness of my training is the lack of strategies to control the discipline of the course and guide the children's work. The cause is my personal motivation, my personality and the lack of work in this aspect" (EP-25).

Regarding the responsibility of the institution, a participant explains that the reason lies in the emphasis placed on careers, which leads to relegating training to practical aspects: "A weakness is that they teach us a lot of theory, but little practice. Thus, there are essential things that must be developed in the establishment, such as class management, relationship with parents, the class book, etc." (EP-37). Another argument for this weakness focuses on the weaknesses experienced due to the pandemic in their last years of university: "As a result of the pandemic, I did not manage to fully develop group management within the classroom, so I consider it a weakness" (EP-16); "One of the weaknesses that every student presents at the time of graduating

from the career is group dominance, which intensified as a result of the pandemic, however, with practice that is changing" (EP-24).

Lack of knowledge about strategies to address special educational needs

Most of the informants identify the lack of pedagogical strategies to address Special Educational Needs (SEN) in regular education as a weakness of their academic training. Some related fragments are: "how to cover special educational needs is a subject in which I feel little competence" (EP-15), "a weakness is not having the tools to face some complex situation regarding SEN" (EP- 31). For teachers, this is a delicate matter, since they recognize the importance of inclusion and integration in educational contexts: "I feel that I do not have the necessary skills to address SEN and for me it is very relevant given the existence of an inclusion law and also because all my students are important" (EP-33).

CATEGORY 2. Perceptions about training for working life

The findings of this research delve into the perceptions of teachers in training about the preparation obtained to face the world of work. Thus, feelings associated with a positive self-assessment emerge.

Featured Sentiments: Confidence and Commitment

As a subcategory, the sentiments highlighted in the context of perceptions about training for working life emerge. Among the main feelings/values, confidence in oneself and in the system, security, responsibility and commitment emerge.

Confidence

The feeling most valued by the participants is trust. According to the speeches, this feeling is conceived as a value and as an inherent trait of every teacher who has a pedagogical vocation. In this regard, it is pointed out: "I define trust as security, both in pedagogical knowledge and in teaching, which, in turn, is linked to vocation" (EP-23). "For me, the fundamental thing about my training as a teacher is the confidence that I have a base and that along the way and with practice new skills will be developed" (EP-36), "what I value most about my teacher training is having confidence in oneself, knowing that, if you make a mistake, you can start over" (EP-9).

Another connection that is established between training and confidence is based on the development of relevant skills to prepare for the world of work and project decision-making, as can be seen in these fragments: "I think that a key factor when studying the profession is self-confidence, to demonstrate how competent it is, despite not having work experience" (EP-20), "the most important thing for training as a teacher is the confidence and security that one shows when developing in the world of work" (EP-34) and "the key value to feel prepared for the world of work is confidence in myself and in my education, knowing how to use tools and make decisions" (EP-27).

Commitment

Commitment is perceived as an agreement or social contract that, many times, is acquired implicitly in relationships between people. In the context of this research, this agreement is directly linked to the professional teaching vocation and extends to collaborative work with the educational community. This is how an informant expresses it when he maintains that "the teaching profession requires a commitment

from the teacher in relation to his constant training, with the strengthening of his vocation and with working with others" (EP-30). This approach not only highlights the importance of commitment, but also relieves it of the demanding nature of its training for working life.

Together with the above, the connection between the commitment to teaching and the preparation to play that role is reaffirmed from the understanding of the differences, the complexity of the system and the imperative of working together to achieve objectives. . This idea is observed in: "the most important value of a teacher is responsibility and commitment to education and knowing how to work as a team, because you always have to relate to others" (EP-14). On this postulate there is agreement among the participants, who reaffirm the importance of commitment in a collaborative climate: "our commitment to students, working collaboratively and being able to face complex situations, always prioritizing learning is transcendental" (EP-17).

Use of strategies

Another of the self-perceptions referring to the strengths entrenched in university education corresponds to the use of various key strategies to face working life as a teacher. The strategies mentioned by the teachers display a wide range that ranges from specific strategies for the immediate resolution of difficulties to reflective and feedback strategies promoted permanently and systematically in the classroom.

Strategies to improve teaching performance. The search for training, autonomous learning and continuing education are among the main strategies that students declare they use to improve their training or that they would use for a good teaching performance: "I think that the greatest strategy will be to have experience

to constantly improve and train myself" (EP-12); "I would worry about reinforcing what I lack by studying autonomously, also, through talks, workshops, diploma courses, which help me to have a more comprehensive profile" (EP-35), "the strategies that I would use to correct my weaknesses would be to be constantly training myself in various areas" (EP-14) and "to improve my training and classroom work, I would continue looking for information to strengthen those things in which I feel shortcomings" (EP-28).

Other informants point out that an important aspect to improve performance in the classroom is the ability to constantly analyze oneself, be aware of one's own strengths and weaknesses and, especially, be self-critical in order to visualize aspects that can be improved. A speech reflects, precisely, these approaches: "for me, self-criticism is a strategy to identify the root of my weakness, and then to seek help to solve the weakness" (EP-25). A similar postulate is highlighted below: "I use several strategies, but one that is relevant to me as a future teacher is self-criticism about my performance, internalized, because only then can I realize the things I need to improve to be an excellent education professional" (EP-27).

Strategies for problem solving and reflection. Parallel to the strategies to visualize a change in teaching practices, the informants identify some strategies used to solve specific problems and for reflection in the classroom. Among the first, there are communication strategies, for consensus, for collaborative work, for feedback and for decision making. Table 3 presents some fragments that illustrate these ideas:

Table 3- Strategies used for problem solving

Strategy Type	Speech
Communication strategies	"When an inconvenience arises, the fundamental thing is to dialogue and communicate effectively to solve the problem" (EP-2).
	"The key to solving difficulties between peers or in classroom work is communication" (EP-21).
Strategies for consensus	"It is relevant to use strategies to reach consensus, with it one collaborates with the teaching of students, discussing and overcoming difficulties" (EP-20).
	"Strategies that I consider important are dialogue and consensus to coordinate teaching work" (EP-10).
Strategies for collaborative work	"I also think that the experiences of other teachers are enriching, so you can work collaboratively" (EP-31).
	"An effective strategy in practices is collaborative work, which allows learning from others and working for the same goal" (EP-16).
Feedback Strategies	"In our training as teachers we learn from our teachers how to give feedback to our future students" (EP-1).
	"Feedback strategies are very necessary to see how we learn and how we teach" (EP-13).
Decision-making strategies	"A vital strategy is one that allows decision-making to adapt teaching or to improve our performance" (EP-22).
	"Teachers must constantly perfect ourselves in strategies and skills that make it possible to make decisions in the classroom" (EP-32).

Strategies for reflection are described as a complex daily task that must be put into practice, both individually and in groups. The development of the strategy is perceived as a strength of the teacher training process, as evidenced in this excerpt: "The strength of my training is the use of strategies, especially, always reflecting on my pedagogical work" (EP-11). As a projection of the implementation of this task, it is expressed: "The strategy that would strengthen would be reflection on my weaknesses and decision-making about my teaching practices" (EP-30). Finally, reflection is referred to as part of the teacher improvement and training process: "The constant reflection on my teaching practice is a strategy related to training to improve myself in a personal and systematic way" (EP-7).

CATEGORY 3. Perceptions about the teaching role

Perceptions about the teaching role is a category that points to the discovery of factors conceived as weaknesses or aspects to improve for optimal teacher performance. In consistency with the insecurities, some challenges are established that would allow an adequate insertion in the labor space of the teaching staff.

Fears and apprehensions

- **Insecurity in various areas.** Among these feelings are the fears and insecurities projected in various areas of their work. Some fragments related to this idea are: "in my future performance, I am afraid of the new or of unexpected situations" (EP-32); "The administrative issue scares me. I do not know the paperwork that is carried out in the establishments and I know very little about the class book" (EP-8); "I feel fears and insecurities about not being able to

help all students in their learning"
(EP-14) and "the main insecurity I
have is whether I will be able to meet
my expectations as a graduate
teacher. Although I feel prepared to
practice, there is the fear of going to
work and it is different from what is
expected" (EP-26).

- **Fears associated with effective
  problem solving.** According to the
  results of the study, the teachers in
  training declare as apprehensions
  about their role those related to the
  effective resolution of problems in the
  face of various situations typical of
  professional practice. The speeches
  that account for this are: "my main
  fears are in the inability to manage
  the classroom in different problematic
  situations" (EP-17); "My main
  weakness is the lack of confidence to
  face the world of work and make
  decisions in the face of a problem"
  (EP-2); "Although the university
  provides strategies, one insecurity is
  not being able to apply my knowledge
  adequately to face difficulties" (EP-
  16) and "I am afraid of making a
  mistake in a conflict, since, as a basic
  teacher, one penetrates and
  influences the future of children" (EP-
  26).

- **Fears associated with
  employability and job placement.**
  Many teachers in training explain the
  insecurity generated by being in the
  final phase of their training process
  and, in the short term, having to
  enter the educational environment to
  put their teaching role into practice.
  On the one hand, insecurities are
  related to employability and, on the
  other, whether job placement is going
  to be satisfactory. For the first case,
  some discourses are: "not getting a
  job generates uncertainty due to little
  or no work experience" (EP-15); "I
  am afraid of having difficulty finding a
  job and that I am not really

competent as a teacher in front of
others" (EP-29). The speeches that
support the second idea are: "there is
a fear that managers are not able to
guide me in entering the world of
work" (EP-13) and "a concern is not
being able to face the challenges of
teaching and adapt to to the world of
work" (EP-35).

- **Apprehensions about not meeting
  expectations about the teaching
  role.** As part of the training process,
  pedagogy students show a desire to
  meet the expectations of the external
  environment in which they are going
  to enter the workforce. However, this
  search for improvement generates in
  the student body some anxiety and
  some apprehensions associated with
  the possibility that the expectations
  that other people have generated
  about their teaching role will not be
  met: "Despite my preparation, there
  are always fears of not being able to
  respond to all needs" (EP-15). A
  similar approach is seen in: "it causes
  nervousness not being able to meet
  the expectations about my teaching
  capacity" (EP-19). Finally, there are
  fears associated with one's own
  expectations and self-imposed
  demands: "I am afraid of not using
  the appropriate strategies to teach"
  (EP-28) and "I am afraid of not being
  able to meet my expectations as a
  teacher" (EP-33).

challenges

Teacher training is associated with a
systematic process that involves acquisition
of knowledge, consolidation of learning,
professional development, incorporation of
strategies; but, at the same time, with the
presence of their own insecurities about their
training and professional future. In this last
aspect, challenges arise from the same

teaching staff, which are projected as ways of expansion and personal growth.

Assertion of responsibility. A challenge highlighted by teachers in training is the strengthening of responsibility, which they perceive of themselves in connection with the social commitment that teaching work implies. Responsibility becomes evident in class planning, in classroom performance and, especially, in the search for effective responses to student learning. On this particular, one of the speeches refers to the process of student demands and pedagogical solutions: "I feel my preparation for the world of work as a process based on responsibility, for me, for my comprehensive training and for trying to be a contribution to my students whenever they require my help" (EP-11).

Another look at this challenge proposes to conceive it as an intrinsic value of the teaching profession, in order to improve pedagogical practices, as noted in the following excerpts: "in this phase *ad portas* of being a teacher I think that the dominant feeling of my role is responsibility, it is something that every teacher must have to work with children and to improve constantly" (EP-22) and "without a doubt, I think it is essential that teachers have responsibility as a value and principle, since it is the base for the construction of learning" (EP-30). These discourses give great importance to responsibility as a quality present in interactions in the classroom, which should contribute to the development of teaching-learning processes.

Permanent search for learning. Another challenge posed to improve personal training and job performance is the permanent search for learning. The participants link this challenge with the ability to constantly improve, to adapt their strategies to their students, to contribute to their learning and to work with others, not only to collaborate,

but to learn from others: "my motivation is to be a good teacher and that my students learn" (EP-5), "I want to be able for my students to learn and enjoy my classes" (EP-26), "I want to learn from other teachers" (EP-9), "I don't want to commit mistakes that harm my students in their learning" (EP-18) and "I am interested in generating skills in my students, to have meaningful learning" (EP-5).

Strengthening of professional security. As has been mentioned, insecurity regarding academic training turns out to be a factor of concern for the participating teachers, since it interferes with the perception, they have of themselves and of the capacities that they could put into practice during their teaching work. Despite these apprehensions, they project as a challenge to achieve a strengthening of professional security, so that it positively affects their performance in the classroom, in their relationship with students, with work colleagues and with the educational community in general. Such approaches are made explicit in the following excerpts: "although I am insecure not being able to teach well or not having a good relationship with students, it is something that can be worked on from practice" (EP-21), "one is afraid of committing mistakes or not being able to give the best to your students, but there are instances to improve on it" (EP-6) and "I am confident that over time I will strengthen my professional security, since I have the skills for it" (EP-28).

DISCUSSION

The categories of analysis that emerge from this research represent the elementary self-perceptions of future teachers about their academic and professional training. In most of the speeches, a positive assessment of these factors is evident; however, it is worth

highlighting a significant number of speeches that focus on the identification of certain weaknesses that require improvement in the medium and short term.

Regarding the "Perceptions on academic training", the results focus attention on the consolidation of learning that could have an impact in the classroom. Teachers in training recognize in their process both strengths and weaknesses that characterize their teaching identity and that are directly related to the institution in charge of their academic training. Consistent with what Asensio and Ruiz (2017) stated, this analysis becomes relevant, since the first perceptions about the teaching process originate at the beginning of teacher training. For their part, these findings are related to what was proposed by Sánchez and Jara (2018), who point out that, between the cognitive, ethical, professional and personal, the identity of the teaching staff is formed, which is fundamental in the academic training process.

The main strengths identified correspond to the development of didactic and disciplinary aspects, communicative management, pedagogical vocation and comprehensive training. These strengths are closely connected with the ability to be fully trained and to receive, from the institution, those tools that allow them to function effectively in educational centers. Teachers in training, in this sense, highlight the value of academic training to interact with others, carry out collaborative work and make decisions for the benefit of students (Perlado *et al.,* 2019). A crucial element is the use of language for communicative purposes; In the context of research, this is one of the strengths that allows teachers to have adequate interaction, a finding that is consistent with Pompa and Pérez (2015). Thus, effective interventions make possible both the settlement of learning and decision-making in the classroom.

The pedagogical vocation is another of the dimensions strengthened in the future educator and this is a quality that determines important decisions, such as choosing a university career, feeling motivated by training and, jointly, projecting themselves as teachers who will contribute to the learning of their students. These approaches are consistent with Mujica and Orellana (2018), for whom the pedagogical vocation is decisive in university training processes and also in continuous training processes. In the same way, the findings link this factor with the implementation of effective strategies for learning and with the concern that the teacher projects for their students, which is consistent with what was postulated by Méndez and Conde (2018), about the fact that it is fundamental that the teacher transmits a pedagogical vocation throughout the teaching-learning process.

Among the weaknesses of the training, the participants detect the lack of practical experience, the little mastery of the group and the lack of strategies for addressing special educational needs. Indeed, a very generalized perception among future teachers accounts for the lack of strategies for control and management of the classroom, an idea that is consistent with the research by Ruffinelli (2013), which refers to the main problems that teachers must face, among them, group management, which is considered a primary component in the teaching-learning process.

Regarding the "Perceptions about training for working life", positive feelings such as trust, security, responsibility and commitment are identified. Likewise, the internalization of various strategies that favor insertion into the world of work is recognized, such as strategies to improve teaching performance, for problem solving and for reflection. Special consideration is given to strategies for problem solving, among which communicative strategies stand out, for

consensus, for collaborative work, for feedback and for decision making. In this context, a large part of the assessments is connected with the professional teaching vocation, especially when referring to the commitment established with the student body and when collaborative work is carried out with the entire educational community. These postulates are consistent with Cadavieco *et al.* (2016), who consider the acquisition of collaborative strategies essential for the implementation of the teaching profession.

Regarding the "Perceptions about the teaching role", self-perceptions with a negative assessment are identified, such as the presence of fears and apprehensions associated with the effective resolution of problems, employability and labor insertion and the fulfillment of the expectations that others have regarding their teaching role. These results correlate with the postulates of Iglesias and Southwell (2020) on the existence of certain limitations inherent to beginning teaching. Although they are considered as hindering aspects for an adequate incorporation into working life, future teachers plan to amend these difficulties through continuous training or their own preparation.

In correspondence with the insecurities and apprehensions, teachers in training pose some challenges that would make a successful job placement possible. Among them, the strengthening of responsibility, the permanent search for learning and the strengthening of professional security. In this area, the existence of social responsibility and the permanent search for learning stands out, a postulate consistent with Rojas *et al.* (2018), in relation to the existence, on the part of the future teacher, of a real commitment to the training of their students and to the generation of pedagogical changes linked to the way in which it is taught and learned. The challenge related to achieving a

strengthening of professional security implies a disposition towards the teaching work and to solve the problems that may arise. These findings are consistent with what was stated by Solís *et al.* (2016), who point out that the success of beginning educators depends on their abilities to adapt to the world of work and face difficulties in a good way, more than on their preparation at the university institution.

In his own teaching reflection, the challenges are projected as important ways of expansion and personal growth. These ideas support what was proposed by Medina *et al.* (2021) in relation to the need to impose challenges on initial teacher training to introduce important changes in professional activity. This study, precisely, has as its main value the deepening of the knowledge of teaching and self-reflection as an important strategy to project their insertion in the labor environment and work, from academic training, on those elements that hinder their professional role. Undoubtedly, there is a pending task here for the entire educational community: a comprehensive improvement that overcomes the weaknesses and insecurities that arise in initial teacher training, and that allows optimal job placement.

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