

## The role of relational experiences with teachers in identity construction of pedagogy student

## El rol de las experiencias relacionales con profesores en la construcción identitaria de estudiantes de pedagogía

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### Abstract

The present study aimed at understanding the relevance of relationships with teachers in the construction of the professional identity of pedagogy students. Through a combination of different techniques of qualitative methodology (grounded theory and narrative approach), life stories of six pedagogy students were analyzed. Students were invited to tell their stories through a semi-structured narrative interview. In this exercise, past and present relationships with teachers were unavoidable referents to build their stories. Since the early stages of their career they had already constructed mental representations about ideal relationships with their future students, based on retrieved relationships with teachers and on their early experiences as teachers (in professional practices, tutoring or volunteering). Most of the students remembered and valued characteristics in teacher-student relationships in which teachers' behaviors and attitudes conveyed emotional safety to their students. Interviewees showed that the autobiographical reflexivity is essential to develop their own pedagogical exercise, either rejecting or assuming as own what they were taught and modeled—or not—by their teachers. They presented an ideal based on a balance between pedagogical authority (asymmetric relationships) and emotional closeness (symmetric relationships), considering that those teachers who were considered as too close or distant, were rejected as pedagogical models.

**Keywords:** teacher-student relationships, teacher identity, authority, autobiographical reflexivity, emotional closeness

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## Resumen

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El presente estudio tuvo por objetivo comprender la importancia de las relaciones con profesores en la construcción de la identidad docente de estudiantes de pedagogía. Mediante una combinación de técnicas propias de la metodología cualitativa (teoría fundada y enfoque narrativo) se analizaron relatos de vida de seis estudiantes de pedagogía que fueron invitados a contar sus historias respondiendo una entrevista semi-estructurada con formato narrativo. En esta tarea las relaciones pasadas y presentes con sus profesores fueron un referente ineludible. Desde los primeros años de carrera ya han construido representaciones mentales sobre las relaciones ideales con sus futuros alumnos, fundamentadas en las relaciones recordadas con sus profesores y en las experiencias tempranas en roles pedagógicos (prácticas profesionales, clases particulares o voluntariados). Las características más recordadas de las relaciones profesor-alumno son conductas y actitudes de los docentes que transmiten seguridad emocional. Los entrevistados mostraron que la reflexividad autobiográfica es esencial para generar un ejercicio docente propio, rechazando y/o apropiándose de lo que les enseñaron y mostraron sus profesores. En este ejercicio representaron un ideal basado en un equilibrio entre la autoridad pedagógica y la cercanía emocional, dado que los profesores percibidos como demasiado cercanos o distantes fueron rechazados como modelos.

**Palabras clave:** relaciones profesor-alumno, identidad docente, autoridad pedagógica, reflexividad autobiográfica, cercanía emocional

Students spend most of their lives at school, which stresses the importance of building a fundamental environment to create meaningful relationships, whether with their peers or with the professionals in charge of them. Thus, learning also occurs at a social and emotional level, since it is always being built on the interaction between people (Flores, 2012).

Regarding this, Geddes (2011) mentions the concept of *development susceptibility* to talk about cases of children who in their upbringing stage were exposed to neglected interpersonal relationships, developing chronic insecurity issues. These students may not be visible for their teachers, being vulnerable and exposed in front of their classmates (Gorostegui & Milicic, 2012).

Even though this scenario seems fateful, school professionals and among them, teachers, are crucial for the students. Teachers can develop spaces of emotional security, which allow students to learn from a solid base, presenting appropriate challenges and showing them different alternatives to interact with adults (Geddes, 2010). In this way, it has been proved that relationships between teachers and students have the potential of compensating the effects of dysfunctional parenting, improving emotional security (Bergin & Bergin, 2009).

Several researchers recognize that teachers are key pieces, even as mediators of school violence situations (Allen, 2010; Holt & Keyes, 2004; Mishna, 2004). In this sense, a teacher is a referent of behavior for the students, and therefore, their training should consider awareness on the importance of the interactional dimension. From a broader perspective, this responsibility also corresponds to the school, given the fact that school policies may ease or hamper the development of these relationships (Bergin & Bergin, 2009).

In contrast, national evidence in Chile shows that teachers feel they are not appropriately prepared in terms of instruction (early and continuing), on how to promote the socioemotional development of these relationships (Berger et al., 2009; Milicic, Alcalay, Berger, Torretti, 2014). Regarding this, the national curriculum includes certain aspects of the socioemotional dimension in their transversal objectives, to be carried out by the teachers, although they perceive that the instruction they receive is deficient to be put into practice (Milicic et al., 2014). More so from relational perspectives, the way in which teachers establish bonds with their students and the way they teach is mostly determined by their own experiences as students (Allidieri, 2004; Bernal-Guerrero & Cárdenas, 2009). That said, a critical reflection of these bonds would enable the construction of a holistic pedagogical identity of the teachers, which allows to examine and modify these experiences in search of wellness for the students' development, and consequently, for their own.

Considering these aspects, the present study aims to understand, from the perspective of trainee teachers, how they manage to incorporate the socioemotional dimension into their pedagogical identity. Specifically, considering theories of attachment and socioemotional development, life experiences of trainee teachers as students are emphasized as relevant, and also, the way in which these experiences are considered as meaningful and integrated into their vision of becoming a teacher.

### Theoretical Background

Evidence from last decades is unequivocal regarding the role of educational institutions about the socioemotional development of its students and subsequent life paths (Aron & Milicic, 1999; Alcalay et al., 2012). From this perspective, teachers play a decisive role by becoming a close referent to students (Berger, Alamos & Milicic, 2016; Sabol & Pianta, 2012), whether establishing direct bonds with them, or promoting positive relationships between the students and their environment.

Although quality of teacher-student relationships depends on the will from both sides, it is recognized that the asymmetric relationship (Allidieri, 2004) in which they are immersed, somehow forces them to “be in charge of the first step to establish a good relationship” (Gallardo & Reyes, 2010, p. 101). This is consistent with some students’ previous stories regarding their negative relationship with adults, having more problems than others to build these relations (Howes & Ritchie, 1999; Bergin & Bergin, 2009). Thus, a teacher has the potential to be especially substantial for some students, not only through relational experiences at early ages, but also by creating bonds throughout the students’ life. Research shows that these bonds may even modify their life trajectory (Karreman & Vingerhoets, 2012; Sabol & Pianta, 2012).

Importance of the teachers’ role conflicts with their feeling of lacking competence to manage the socioemotional dimension of learning. Several local studies have shown that teachers, regardless of the concrete actions they may carry out, feel that they are not prepared to face socioemotional situations in the classroom (Marchant, Milicic & Alamos, 2013; Milicic et al., 2014; Toro & Berger, 2012). In this way, emphasis on the socioemotional dimension in education during the last decade (Hoffman, 2009) implies new challenges for teachers, who report not having been prepared for this.

Interestingly, teachers seem to replicate with their students, the ways in which they related to their own teachers when they were students (Bernal-Guerrero & Cardenas, 2009), especially regarding relational experiences. In this way, it is fundamental to go deeply into attachment theory, since most of the research about teacher-student relationships has derived from it (Verschueren, & Koomen, 2012; Sabol & Pianta, 2012).

#### Brief description of attachment theory

Bowlby (1969 en Lecannelier, 2014) proposed that from the relationship with the main caretakers, particularly the mother, an *internal working model* arises, determining the way in which people perceive themselves, influencing their expectations regarding how others will treat them. To behave confidently in interpersonal relationships, it would be necessary to have experienced a secure attachment during the first years of life, which would allow the person to assimilate the expectation of being taken care of, and supported (Bowlby, 1986).

This statement is crucial for this study, since Geddes (2011) sustains that it is possible to observe behaviors which match these models of internal functioning within the every-day practice as a teacher, and that their actions are fundamental for the students to have a positive approach towards learning. At the same time, it has been proven that teachers are able to compensate relational flaws, modifying interpersonal models characterized by insecurity, and thus, they may become *figures of secondary attachment* (Bergin & Bergin, 2009; Sabol & Pianta, 2012).

Even though students may perform caring actions similar to those carried out by parents, an instructional role is mainly attributed to them, not necessarily constituting an attachment bond (Kesner, 2000). However, given the fact that attachment behaviors are more frequently activated in small children,

since they have difficulties when self-regulating, their teachers are the ones who tend to perform the role of a caretaker (Verschuere, & Koomen, 2012), helping them and providing emotional support to control anxiety, promoting at the same time frustration tolerance (Geddes, 2011). As an example, Toro y Berger (2012) point out that particularly head teachers, are in risk of creating dependent relationships with their students, by not being clear regarding the limits of their role as a teacher, in contrast with a parental role. This shows how teachers require a formal and intentional instruction to promote the socioemotional development of their students.

In the same way, it has been suggested that teachers' emotional relationships with their families and those who taught them at school, unavoidably affect the relationships they will establish with their own students (Milicic et al., 2014). As an example, Kesner (2000) found significant correlations between teachers raised under a strict discipline and more distant relationships with their students. Nevertheless, the relationship between the teachers' history with their pedagogical models and the interaction they establish with their students, has not been further developed.

Regarding this, an aspect which has not been approached in literature yet, is how these emotional bonds, attachment related or not, may influence the construction of teachers' identity promoting exploration of new skills. Based on the national survey of teachers' adequacy (2008), Sotomayor, Cavada and Sevilla (2013) explain that pedagogical and family models were secondary factors in terms of making the decision of studying to become a teacher in Chile. However, neither that study, nor the book to which it belongs (Avalos, 2013) considers deeply emotional relationships with teachers, as influential figures in building their pedagogical identity or teaching practice.

### **Pedagogical identity**

Pedagogical identity is built throughout the teachers' life (Beijaard, Meijer & Verloop, 2004; Coldron & Smith, 1999): school constructs meaning about what it means to be a good teacher, and what that role implies; at university, besides learning specific knowledge of their fields and skills, they will have to in Allidieri's words (2004, p.18), "assimilate from their teachers-professional models, the subsequent pedagogical practices they will use". Once working on the field of pedagogy, they will continue to act concordantly to their previous experiences, making them coherent with their current practices through constant interpretation (Coldron & Smith, 1999).

Deepening into affective relationships with teachers and their link to identity exploring processes, pedagogy students are an interesting population to be studied, since university grants them with a vast period of exploration (Arnett, 2000). According to the meta-analysis about pedagogical instruction in Chile, carried out by Cisternas (2011), research approaching this topic from pedagogy students, has focused on opinions about instruction itself; nevertheless, as the author establishes "research regarding the way in which the student becomes a teacher or the way in which they learn, is less common" (p. 148).

From a different perspective, Beijaard, Meijer and Verloop in 2004 carried out a literature review regarding the concept of pedagogical identity, concluding that studies regarding the topic, did not systematically define the concept. In connection with this, in 2010, Hamman, Gosselin, Romano and Bunuan described that international literature has underused psychological theories, leaving a gap regarding the formation of teachers' identity, especially when considering relations between their present and future. These authors used the *possible-selves' theory* by Markus and Nurius (1986) to study identity processes in teachers from the United States, since it would allow them to identify several *future self-projections* closely related with current and past definitions of themselves. This perspective postulates that people develop mental representations about the way they are, the way they want to be and what they afraid of becoming. From this theory, identity is the current definition of the subject, who projects into the future, their desired and feared selves.

Coldron & Smith (1999) explain that to talk about pedagogical identity, it is necessary to look at it from a perspective which mainly considers *human agency*, or from a perspective which emphasizes the power of social constrictions. In other words: Does the teacher choose what characteristics they want to have as professionals or is their ability to decide limited by the underlying culture? These authors propose an in-between position, in which the subject can choose up to a certain point, from which social and cultural

traditions they will define themselves and act. By telling their own story, the teacher or future professional is capable of positioning her/himself within a net of personal and cultural meanings (Cabrera, 2015).

Thus, the present study approaches identity from a constructivist perspective, being narrative at the same time, since it is understood as a mental framework that the subjects themselves define continuously and actively, by telling (themselves) a coherent narration about her/himself (Ávalos, 2013; Beijaard et al, 2004; Cabrera, 2015) always in regards of their social and cultural environment (Coldron & Smith, 1999).

However, if emotional relationships with teachers influence the representations of the students about the ability to help others, it would also affect beliefs about what it is considered as a good teacher. Those experiences would shape the ideals of a future professional, being defined from the options which have been offered and chosen by the subject. The representational model built through experiences derived from emotional attachment and it is construed throughout the life cycle. Even though this system seems to have some inconsistent aspects, it is also possible to raise awareness regarding certain courses of action and reactions (Main, Kaplan & Cassidy, 1985). Particularly for teachers, it is possible to expect that a constant reflexive activity would help making clear the reason of their beliefs and actions (Coldron & Smith, 1999), causing the self-concept to be deepened and remembered, creating models of who they want to become (Markus & Nurius, 1986). It is through this conscious exercise that the future teacher will be able to question others' actions, reacting to opposite values considered as fundamental by the professional.

Bernal-Guerrero and Cardenas' study (2009) is a good example of relating teachers' memories and their past actions with their identity. Researchers used deep interviews and questionnaires to identify the relationship between having teachers with skills to manage emotionality in the classroom, and the positive contribution to the pedagogical identity of those who want to become teachers. However, this research does not deepen into the reasons of this construction. In this point, Cabrera (2015), without deeply analyzing emotional relationships, proposes to pay more attention to the reactive components of pedagogical self-definition. That is to say, what teachers reject versus what they incorporate as necessary to their performance.

Considering the theoretical background presented here, the questions which guided this research were: What do pedagogy students think regarding relationships with their own previous teachers? What type of reflection emerges from it? Is it an aspect that has influenced their training as teachers and their future projections? Are these experiences and ideals coherent with what they have been carrying out on their professional practice? Accordingly, the main objective of this research was to understand the mental representations of pedagogy students, regarding their previous and current experiences with their own teachers. The main objectives deriving from these are: a) to understand the influence of these relationships on the construction of identity as future teachers; b) to examine how these mental representations shape themselves, regarding the desired relationships they wish to establish with their future students; and c) to understand the relationship between these representations and the empiric evidence already experienced in pedagogical roles (professional practice, tutoring or volunteering).

## Methodology

The present study was developed from a narrative and constructivist approach, using a qualitative methodologic approach. Six semi-structured interviews were carried out, asking pedagogy students from Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile: two from pre-primary education, two from secondary school education and two from elementary school education, from different years<sup>1</sup>. Participants offered themselves as volunteers after obtaining brief information about the project. To ensure anonymity, their names were replaced by random nicknames. The number of interviewees was determined through a grounded theory method, which defined a saturation criterion (Strauss & Corbin, 2002). After obtaining information from these interviews, it was determined that a higher number would not add variability to the content. Although the process of formation of the selves is different and the narration differs in biographical facts, projections of the future professionals regarding their future relationships coincide among them.

<sup>1</sup> See table 1

Table 1  
*Sampling of participants in the study*

Interviewees alias	School of origin	Studies	Age category
E1: Mariana	Two municipal establishments	Pedagogía general básica. Segundo año. Primera carrera.	19-20
E2: Diana	Two private establishments	Pedagogía general básica. Quinto año. Primera carrera.	23-25
E3: Jaime	Private subsidized school (until sixth grade) Excellency municipal establishment	Pedagogía en enseñanza media mención matemáticas. Primer año. Anteriormente estudió tres años de ingeniería	21-24
E4: Raquel	Private school	Pedagogía en educación de párvulos. Tercer año.	20-22
E5: Valentina	Private school	Pedagogía en educación de párvulos. Tercer año.	20-22
E6: Diego	Private school	Pedagogía en enseñanza media mención física. Primer año. Anteriormente estudió dos años en el programa College.	22-24

### Analytical tools and methodological approach

According to Bruner (1991), people would use “popular psychology” to give meaning to their experiences, and the exercise of recognizing coherence between the latter and their lives, is the narration of their biographies. For this, representations or meanings are required as interpretations of life experiences, creating multiple possibilities of identity construction; although defined by Markus and Nurius (1986) as the definition of the subject in the present, it is also manifested continuously throughout all the temporal lines.

Understanding the complexity to approach the identity phenomenon, a quantitative study was designed, allowing to recognize the process of identity search from a biographical narration, giving coherence to previous experiences through a narrative exercise (Bruner, 1991). From the relational experiences with others, subjects would have a broad range of examples to create more complex versions of their own selves (Ricoeur, 1990). For these reasons, the best way to understand in which way experiences with teachers influence identity of the interviewees, is to help them reconstruct their stories.

Some authors have considered the grounded theory based as an opposite in many aspects to a narrative analysis (Bernasconi, 2011; Capella, 2013; Riessman, 2008). Regardless of this, the objectives of these types of analysis are not mutually exclusive: they both recommend narrating considering who, where, why and how. Also, they both recommend avoiding fragmentation of the information, using only concepts which have been already developed from the theoretical background, prioritizing the emergency of new constructs (Cornejo, Mendoza, & Rojas, 2008). The challenge is to find a balance between an inductive logic (concepts emerging from what it is said by the interviewees) and a deductive one through which the interviewer compares the new concepts with the bibliographical information previously gathered (Titscher, 2000).

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Although the analysis cannot be classified as narrative as such, the type of interview used for the study was developed to elicit a story with this format, since through this exercise the teacher builds her/his own identity making it coherent with the chronology of events (Capella, 2013). Then, it is possible to say that the main difference lies in the different tools that each approach proposes.

Throughout the analysis process, the tools recommended by the grounded theory turned out to be fundamental to develop a systematic analysis, with a constant balance between theoretical induction and deduction. Besides, it considered clearly defined steps, available for novice researchers (Strauss & Corbin, 2002). The inter-play between both approaches was developed through a cross-cutting theoretical background, that is to say, some novel categories were increased in complexity and subdivided from concepts reviewed from a theoretical source. In the same way, when the analysis seemed to be impeded through lack of conceptual tools to understand the narration, researchers used extra bibliographic material.

The analysis was carried out through different intertwined phases:

1. *Open coding* from each interview (Strauss & Corbin, 2002): tentative theoretical categories were obtained in this stage, and also labels to categorize significant events. Moreover, this coding integrated the *process*, that is to say, the temporal axis (life periods of the narration). Simultaneously, questions were made to clarify some points with the interviewee in the eventual second meeting which was necessary only in a few cases missing relevant information.
2. *Intra-case analysis*: to deepen into the narrations of each interviewee, a story for each one of them was written including the previously identified categories. This allowed to understand the several selves, desired and projected and the representations about the relationship with their current and future students. Because of time constraints, the analysis of this material could not be presented in this article.
3. Although an axial coding was not carried out as such, since defining relationships as strictly casual was considered unnecessary, the research did take into account the *structure* or *context of interaction*, which in this case was fundamental to understand the narrations. Moreover, a diagram of *dichotomous elements* from Cabrera (2015) and Gunn (2007) was carried out, allowing to generate a view of the elements identified as negative and positive on the relational experiences from the interviewees, as previously categorized elements<sup>2</sup>. This was carried out for each interview to avoid generalizations and to allow a more detailed comparison. At the same time, it was useful to find differences regarding how each subject built the story; some by expressing ideals when facing negative experiences (reactivity) and others by trying to imitate or making positive aspects more complex. These diagrams organized experiences and their representations on a temporal line, making the possible selves (past, future and present) clearer.

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<sup>2</sup> See example in figure 1



Figure 1.

Note: The central circle shows the concept that has been identified as the representative of the desired self of the interviewees. The categories around show the concept that has been interpreted as fundamental to carry said desired self. The concepts in the border of the bigger circle are the characteristics and/or conducts seen as positive from the most recalled teachers. The more remote categories are rejected or feared characteristics that teachers want to avoid in their practices.

4. Finally, comparison between cases was carried out with the help of a grid, in which categories and concepts were organized, being hierarchically divided according to i) Experiences with teachers and representations about these; ii) Possible selves and identity; iii) Professional idea in experiences as a teacher; and iv) the self-definition process. From this categorization, cross-cutting thematic axes<sup>3</sup> were identified, that is to say, shared meanings about pedagogy and the teacher-student relationship. Also, to organize this step, a glossary was designed to define the main concepts<sup>4</sup>, and its subcategories.

5. The final part of the inter-case analysis deepened into the narrative of the cross-cutting thematic axes from the interviews. This phase allowed to integrate the categorized concepts and the theories reviewed throughout the study<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> See Figure 1  
<sup>4</sup> See Figure 2  
<sup>5</sup> See Figure 3



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### Instrument

Interviews had a narrative approach with the aim of generating a reflexive exercise by the speakers regarding their biographical experiences with teachers.

This type of interview consisted on an invitation for pedagogy students to be interviewed to tell part of their lives or to narrate specific life processes, trying to interrupt the least possible, for the narrator to emphasize what they think is relevant; when finishing the story, some episodes or opinions are asked for clarification for the research (Atkinson, 2001). Invitation for this study was presented like this: "I would like to hear from your educational story, and your relationships with teachers throughout your life". When finishing the narration, they were asked about some specific teachers and events which were not deepened when narrating. Then, it was necessary to ask which was their ideal of a teacher in that moment.

When approaching identity as a narrative construct, it is understood that the speaker is making an effort to put significant events into order, realizing about some moments which could have been overlooked (Atkinson, 2001), at the same time building their own identity (Ricoeur, 1988 en Goodson & Scherto, 2011). Moreover, several authors have postulated that this exercise is particularly useful for pedagogy students and for teachers, by causing a reflection which will influence their professional practice (Olson, 2007). Regarding this, Connelly and Clandinin (1994) explain that the *personal and professional narrations* are intertwined within the pedagogical practice, being thus, a relevant part of the pedagogical instruction and practice. It is fundamental for these authors to recognize that the lives of their teachers, and how they narrate the stories, influences the learning of their students, since by knowing their own story, they are willing to understand their students', giving them space to explore. Henderson (2001), emphasizes the need of having *reflexive teachers*, since they would be the professionals who understand their students the better, and those who at the end, are more suitable to teach democratic values. In this way, this methodology may bring benefits for the participants, as the narrative exercise about their experiences constitutes in itself a formative action.

### Results

For reasons concerning the extension of the present paper, here it is only shown the final analysis concerning the identification of cross-cutting meanings linked with teacher-student relationships. The objective of the analysis is to deeply comprehend the representations of the interviewees, understanding them in the context of professional practice and the underlying cultural meanings. Therefore, the development of an explanatory theory was disregarded because it could have generated an unnecessary distance upon the data by referring to general explanations or by working from only one central concept.

By merging the possible-selves' theory (Markus and Nurius, 1986) it was possible to identify the desired projections and fears of the interviewees, which were organized, first, through diagrams of dichotomous elements in which the desired selves and their contents (at the center of the figure and at the borders) faced the practices or rejected meanings of each teacher that was remembered<sup>6</sup>. Subsequently, the information was summarized from the diagram in which the sub-categories<sup>7</sup> of each case were presented.

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6 See Figure 1

7 See Table 2

Table 2

Entrevistado	Identidad personal y profesional (presente)	Si mismo enfrentado a la práctica pedagógica	Construcción identitaria (cómo)
Mariana	Educación equitativa: rescate de mentes	<p>Sí mismo deseado:</p> <p>a) Equilibrio entre simetría y asimetría</p> <p>b) Rol maternal limitado (depende del alumno)</p> <p>i. Enseñanza de valores sociales carentes</p> <p>c) Enseñanza equitativa</p> <p>Si mismo temido:</p> <p>a) Miedo de perjudicar el desarrollo de niños muy pequeños</p> <p>b) Poco apoyo de apoderados</p>	<p>Reactividad ante experiencias de desincentivo de la participación</p> <p>Rechazo a estilos de crianza y enseñanza autoritarios</p>
Diana	Educación equitativa: rescate de mentes	<p>Si mismo deseado:</p> <p>a) Rescate de mentes: inclusión de alumnos con dificultades</p> <p>b) Equilibrio entre simetría y asimetría: establecimiento de límites desde el respeto</p> <p>Si mismo temido:</p> <p>a) Descontrol ante desorden de alumnos: uso de prácticas autoritarias mediante abuso de poder</p>	<p>Reactividad ante profesores poco preparados para el abordaje de la diversidad</p> <p>Superación de propias dificultades de aprendizaje como insumo identitario</p>
Jaime	Comprensión empática Solidaridad	<p>Si mismo deseado:</p> <p>a) Relación de seguridad profesor-alumno</p> <p>b) Equilibrio entre asimetría y simetría: humor/normas</p> <p>i. Conocer al alumno</p> <p>ii. Evitar frustración de alumnos</p> <p>c) Expectativas altas respecto a todos los alumnos</p> <p>Si mismo temido:</p> <p>a) Equilibrio entre simetría y asimetría</p>	<p>Reactividad ante sacrificio de las emociones en desmedro de lo académico</p> <p>Superación de dificultades de aprendizaje como insumo identitario</p>
Raquel	Educación desde el descubrimiento y el juego	<p>Si mismo deseado:</p> <p>a) Preocupación por etapa vital de los estudiantes</p> <p>b) Acompañamiento vital desde las diferencias</p> <p>c) Flexibilidad</p> <p>Si mismo temido:</p> <p>a) Clases despersonalizadas</p> <p>b) Más preocupación por la planificación que por el niño</p> <p>c) Equipos profesionales con actitud técnica</p> <p>i. Estilos de enseñanza autoritarios</p> <p>ii. Castigos desde la impaciencia</p>	<p>Vocación destinada</p> <p>Rechazo a escolarización (autoritarismo y rigidez) de la educación de párvulos</p>

Valentina	Educación desde el descubrimiento y el juego	<p>Si mismo deseado:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Educación de párvulos vs pedagogía básica</li> <li>b) Educación de párvulos desde el juego</li> <li>c) Preocupación por etapa vital de los estudiantes</li> <li>d) Educadora de padres</li> <li>e) Influencia en equipos de trabajo</li> <li>f) Empatía ante dificultades de aprendizaje</li> <li>g) Educadora líder: creadora de cambios</li> </ul> <p>Si mismo temido:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Repetición irreflexiva de prácticas pasadas</li> </ul>	Rechazo a estilos autoritarios Oposición reiterada a profesores autoritarios
Diego	Exploración y aprendizaje continuo Docencia como arte indagatorio	<p>Si mismo deseado:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Docencia como arte indagatorio               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Equilibrio entre ser investigador y pedagogo</li> </ul> </li> <li>b) Preocupación por etapa vital de los estudiantes</li> <li>c) Carisma: Capacidad para motivar a los alumnos</li> <li>d) Flexibilidad en el uso de estrategias pedagógicas</li> <li>e) Equilibrio entre simetría y asimetría               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Generación de confianza con los estudiantes</li> </ul> </li> <li>f) Traducir contenidos en ejemplos visibles y cercanos a los estudiantes</li> <li>g) Contextualizar conocimientos al contexto de la asignatura</li> </ul> <p>Si mismo temido:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Equilibrio entre simetría y asimetría</li> </ul> <p>Rechazo a:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Docente como técnico               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. Instruir sólo contenido</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Dos profesores como modelos pedagógicos positivos Apoyo de figura de apego en la escuela (mantención de relación con ese profesor) No menciona modelos reactivos

Nota: The complete versión of this table included a column named “Experiences with teachers and representations of them” that was not included because of its extension. This column organized categories and concepts around the memories of the relationships made with certain teachers. From that column were extracted the results presented on the third column.

It seems notorious that all the interviewees connected their ideals regarding teaching with their past experiences in emotional relationships (school and university as well) with teachers, so much so, that they were amazed themselves at realizing during the interview about the importance those relationships had had, positive as well as negative.

### Cross-Cutting Thematic Axes

**Rejection of authoritarian styles of teaching.** All of the interviewees showed a strong rejection towards the teachers assessed as authoritarian: aloof, unapproachable, discouraged, forbidding, that show no will for communication and support, evasive towards an intimate treatment and inclusive practices, and prone to publicly humiliate the students. Rejection was also manifested towards teachers that were perceived to approach the students from a technical enforcement. They were associated with arbitrary conducts and aptitudes coinciding, sometimes, with authorities. The technical is associated to a social context of generalization of the education in Chile, in the 1970’s, which was created out of the necessity

to account for more teachers. That is the reason why the teaching careers multiplied and finally led to the “definition of the role of the teacher as a technician, namely, a role of execution or application whose competences were easily achieved” (Núñez, 2004, p. 4). From this concept of technicality, it is interpreted that it is possible to identify teachers and teacher assistants that only concern themselves with the performance of mechanical work without enough attention regarding their students. Likewise, Coldron and Smith (1999) explain that such approach to the teaching duty as a finite collection of abilities is part of a sociocultural tradition (craft tradition), promoted by some governments which define the teaching body as specialized professionals in certain competences which are easily achieved. The interviewees place themselves upon a definition which is the opposite of that. Diego manifested his opinion as such:

... they were only teachers... and I didn't feel like they were actually there to... there to... to teach a lesson... to teach... (...) not to educate, they were not there to create an emotional relationship.

**Emotional closeness.** Contrarily, there was a unanimous appraisal for the emotional closeness between the teacher and the student. The feeling of closeness becomes relevant as it possesses practical consequences. Hargreaves in 2001 coined the concept of emotional geographies to explain the importance of considering a sort of relational mapping between the teacher and the student.

To treasure a teacher depends on the element of closeness, physically and psychologically: the concepts of availability, receptivity, accessibility, flexibility, authoritarian and/or arbitrary practices, differentiate each other in terms of emotional geographies given that the first two require physical closeness (inside the classroom), while accessibility and flexibility implicate psychological closeness (for instance, to know that the teacher is in his or her office or that he or she will answer the messages, provide assistance and give understandable examples).

An educator that is empathetic, receptive, available, accessible and flexible could become a figure of emotional attachment if the connection with the student remains through time or at least remains as a crucial reference for the self-concept. These characteristics would allow for the student to have a feeling of security at the time of learning.

On the other hand, the legitimacy of the authority regarding the teacher is, nowadays, questioned. Educational institutions are no longer enough to summon thoughtless respect, their influence has decayed and, thus, it is the teachers' duty to legitimize themselves. The later cannot be achieved outside the emotional relationships with the students (Abramowski, 2010). The challenge is, then, to show the students that teaching can be achieved from an asymmetric position, and give, at the same time, support through empathy.

Nevertheless, as Hargreaves (2001) proposes, authoritarianism emerges in connection with lowering the anxiety of being in a position that has little influence and that others can disregard. However, if that masking is coherent according with the teacher's values, the underlying emotions can be positive. That is the case of each interviewee as they explained that they had to compel themselves to be thorough or authoritarian on certain occasions. That is the reason why a balance between both positions becomes necessary.

**Balance Between symmetry and asymmetry.** In this manner, emotions would serve to legitimize teaching, but also, they would be a source of hierarchical undermining. The latter can be observed in the words of the interviewees, who appreciate balanced teachers, concerned but not exceedingly emotional or friendly.

Rather, legitimization is achieved from an intermediate position, in which the teacher is capable of being thorough regarding instruction, generating intellectual challenges and maintaining order, but at the same time is capable of being available, accessible, flexible, patient, concerned about each of the students' peculiarities and able to value their input.

It is estimated that the achievement of such balance has been a challenge concerning the actual experience as teachers (professional practices, private lessons or volunteering). Failure in this area grounds a fear of generating practices with authoritarian hues, a fear that is enhanced at the thought of being pushed to it because of specific educational contexts (in emblematic schools, schooled kindergartens,

rigid planning structures, etc.). Hence a certain level of asymmetry is pivotal as the teacher is always safeguarded by it, placing his or herself in the asymmetric position from the start:

One must have that hierarchical relationship in the classroom, I believe that one must have it but must not be strongly marked by it. If (...) your students trust you (...) that has to come from establishing an emotional relationship, if they feel like they can approach you with any type of problem (Diego).

Despite this, it is the abuse of the latter that hinders the learning processes, inhibits the making of questions, creates a mood of insecurity and the classes become little gratifying.

Teachers were the type that come to teach a class very strictly, like the rules are like this and only I am in charge and no one else, only I have the absolute truth inside the classroom and no one else. They would give you like uhm, space for you to make mistakes, that is why I started to do poorly in school, because I was afraid of commenting on anything (Mariana).

**Learning Contexts and Response.** In the accounts of Jaime, Raquel, Valentina, Diana and Mariana, clear references to the learning contexts could be observed. The school as a synonymous of rigidity, meaningless punishments, passivity and little exploring. For Raquel and Valentina, is contrary in the case of pre-schooling, because the latter would not require texts books, nor tables, nor punishments.

For Diana, a “non-traditional” context is necessary, a different school in which diversity is valued and the teachers show a perspective that leaves room for mistakes and various interests.

It has to do with a sort of “non-traditional” context of learning and education. I started to feel closer to the teacher and to see, also, that they were human, I mean that they could get a little out of that classic role of the teacher (...), the “quebrantahuesos” (*type of Chilean poetry created by Nicanor Parra*) and things like that in language courses (...), even though I saw it as something very complex, it was like it made all the themes we were studying come together which, maybe, in other contexts we would not have encountered (Diana).

The latter feeling of cross-cutting support is what would generate a community of professional practice in which the teacher could share meanings, beliefs, conducts with their similar objectives (Escudero, 2008), and that could allow for an identity exploration to take place from the will to support the students and keeping positive relationships between teachers and students.

**Autobiographical Thought: The Moral and Artistic Tradition.** The critiques to school itself, to the educational system or to certain behaviors among teachers, give hints that the interviewees place themselves in front of a moral tradition of teaching that refers to:

Critically evaluating the school’s habitual practices and structures necessarily involves moral judgements and sometimes radical critique. This in turn implies the ability to perceive where things are not right, to think how things might be otherwise, to envisage other possibilities (...) to position oneself in relation to them. (Coldron & Smith, 1999, p. 717)

As it was explained before, the critiques are closely connected to autobiographical thought and projections about the future teacher to be. Based on their educational experiences as students, they develop values and ideals that would guide their decisions, whether about what courses to take, or about what appropriate apprenticeships to enroll in to be a better teacher, or what is the best way to relate with the students.

Then, it becomes clear the importance that the interactions between teacher-student, school-student has in the forming of the teachers’ identity: the memories of such experiences are the fundamental input for the duty. Nevertheless, the individual’s conscious thought is crucial for he or she to achieve a coherence regarding the experience and what is desired to be accomplished in the future. At the same time, the recollected emotions are in constant dialogue with the process, they are used as referential points of what is right and wrong, and they are one of the principal resources for consolidating the teacher’s identity (Zembylas, 2003).

**Desired Selves.** Even though the desired selves of the interviewees are defined differently and with emphasis on work and personal projections (in this case, to be a pedagogue and researcher, to ensure equal participation, to teach from the game of being a teacher of parents and to be supportive to the students),

they coincide in what is estimated as necessary to consolidate the following ideals: 1) the development of abilities grounded on empathy (availability, accessibility and flexibility); and 2) the achievement of a balance between relational symmetry and asymmetry, translated as an inter-game between emotional closeness and/or distance (anchoring discipline for example). On the other hand, the feared selves coincide in the fear to develop excessive emotional closeness and/or distance with the students, because the former could result in an overly friendly approach, while too much distance could be related to authoritarian or arbitrary practices, both being mistakes as they could prevent the achievement of a proper mood for learning.

Abramowski (2010) warns about the instance in which when the teachers grounded their professional practice on a concern to emotionally help their students, they are at risk of viewing their students as subjects in disadvantage, necessity and, as subjects that account with less capacities. The latter would consist on a therapeutic narrative which uses teachers' emotions as an intuitive resource, as a natural response to deem a student as an individual in need. However, the interviewees make use of conscious thought to decide, in each case separately, which requires support. This is based on their own experiences as students that were, or were not, emotionally supported by their teachers. Autobiographical thought allows negotiating the desired balance from previous experiences and pedagogical practices.

### Discussion

Psychological theories about socioemotional development show how relational styles are transferred from experiences as nurtured to caretaker. Considering that teachers are constituted as significant figures for their students, even as secondary attachment subjects, it is important to understand from where the professional identity is being built. This turns particularly relevant given the recent emphasis of socioemotional education in teaching-learning, and the evidence of its impact in several development indicators (Hoffman, 2009).

Several cultural changes have redefined the role of teacher; new teachers face the need to modify models and patterns learned from their experiences as students. The main challenge is to understand the referents from which the question raises, and secondly, to identify the processes that allow and enable this redefinition.

Reflectivity appears as a central concept, from which the way in which students guide themselves is understood, by choosing what practices, attitudes or beliefs they want to consider, including or excluding them from their day-to-day performance, in constant dialogue with the underlying sociocultural traditions of their context (moral, technical, artistic, scientific and therapeutic tradition)<sup>8</sup>.

Autobiographical reflection is also fundamental for the resolution of conflicts of itself. Otherwise, the concept of active construction would not be used, since the connection between the experienced and the wished selves can only be born out of that reflection. Without it, identity would be a simple deployed product, imitates and excludes change, causing teachers to imitate traditional practices although these would have turned out to be detrimental. Complexity and the number of these reflections are different in each case, indicating that it would be a developable skill, related to the level of exploration throughout someone's life.

Results from the present study confirm the formative value of the autobiographical reflection, coinciding with several authors (Connelly & Clandinin, 1994; Goodson & Scherto, 2011; Henderson, 2001). Thus, reflection instances are desirable during early and continuing education, and also during daily work of the teachers at their schools. Considering the long working hours of the teachers, it is hard for this practice to position itself as a systematic activity; thereof, it would be interesting to integrate this reflective space within a continuing professional development model, generating practice community or other tools which allow a continuous reflection; individual as well as shared.

A central aspect of all the narrations from this study was the emphasis on the emotional bonds between teachers and students. These relationships are relevant not only for the students, but also for the teachers

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<sup>8</sup> See Figure 3

themselves. The latter supposes the development of skills regarding authoritarian or democratic leadership, and also, about communicative skills.

From a methodological perspective, this study reveals the importance of complementing different strategies of analysis, integrating the approach from grounded theory which allowed to observe phenomena and emergent patterns shared for all participants, with a narrative perspective that considered evolutive trajectories which allowed to observe how past experiences project towards future definitions (possible selves), through a present reflective process.

Interviewees from this study showed particular motivation for the topic, since they participated voluntarily when hearing a brief description of the objectives of the research; this might be the reason of the coincidence on meanings and the desired selves. The research was carried out on subjects who had already gone through an exploring exercise, willing to tell their stories, sharing also, a similar background. Regarding this, it would be interesting to carry out similar investigations with participants from different universities and social origins, to increase variability of the stories and motivations. This is based on the observation of the results revealing the role of practice communities, and the importance of knowing stories from different contexts and the possible meanings they may recognize.

As a projection, it is possible to consider a follow-up study for these interviewees, to understand possible change processes: how the desired selves dialogue with daily working practice, materializing or not as pedagogical identities.

Likewise, reachability and availability proved to be fundamental to consider a teacher as a role model, being possibly considered on the pedagogical evaluation processes in Chile, since the current one, considers an assessment criteria related to an environment for “integration, equity, trust, solidarity and respect”, within the Framework of Good Education (Ministry of Education, 2003). These aspects could be considered as part of the emotional availability with the students, since reachability seems to be considered as an aspect to be covered outside the working hours, or as a supplement to the teachers’ role. However, it is necessary to consider these aspects carefully, since an over-consideration in their measurement could deepen the exclusive “technification” of the teaching professionals.

In essence, the present article contributes to current literature by handing in an ideographic alternative to the study of trainee teachers, attributing importance to their instruction period as a crucial moment in which they may experience different ideals, building at the same time their identities, from what their social environment is offering. Methodologically speaking, it contributes with an experience which mixes several analytical strategies to enrich the understanding of the phenomenon. Lastly, the study allow to establish that teacher-student relationships are fundamental for identity and professional development of the teachers, since they work as experiences to recur to, in order to guide action.

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### Figuras Anexadas

1. **Empatía (categoría emergente):** comprender necesidades diversas de los alumnos desde conceptos de la literatura: “empatía pedagógica” (Martínez-Otero, 2011, p.176): “reivindicamos desde estas líneas una formación integral en la que junto a la dimensión técnica, se tenga en cuenta la vertiente humana y, en concreto, aspectos de índole emocional y moral como los que estamos abordando”. Entender al otro como único, cuyas opiniones y perspectivas son valorables, es necesario para generaciones que den la bienvenida a la diversidad. Es el antecedente principal de los siguientes conceptos:
  - i) **Sensibilidad** (Sabol & Pianta, 2012): reconocer pistas emocionales de los alumnos. Como categoría emergente se denominó como receptividad.
  - ii) Preocupación por aprendizaje de los alumnos.
    - a. **Cercanía** (Miicic, Alcalay, Berger & Torretti, 2014): conocer intereses y características de los alumnos, mostrar interés sincero. En los entrevistados apareció como una sensación de que el profesor es disponible y accesible. Incluye un aspecto de cercanía física relevante, los entrevistados reportan sensaciones de que algunas acciones o actitudes de los profesores les producían reacciones de alejamiento o de cercanía. También la cercanía física (caracterizada por caricias en cursos tempranos o en apoyo personal para los superiores) variaba en algunos casos en que los docentes se enteraban de problemas personales de los alumnos, de forma que a veces la relación cambiaba según la información obtenida sobre el alumno.
    - b. **Disponibilidad** (Miicic, Alcalay, Berger & Torretti, 2014): ofrecer apoyo emocional y límites cuando sea necesario (Sabol & Pianta, 2012), se entiende aquí como un apoyo
      - i. dentro del aula o de espacios académicos oficiales. Implicaría una cercanía física.
      - ii. **Accesibilidad:** mostrar como accesible el conocimiento que posee el docente (Covarrubias & Piña, 2004) y abrir posibilidades de poder reunirse con el profesor en momentos fuera del horario convencional. La cercanía es psicológica: genera seguridad de que el profesor estará cuando sea requerido.
      - iii. **Flexibilidad pedagógica:** utilización de diversos recursos en pro del aprendizaje, aunque sean poco elaborados (dibujos, videos, humor, etc...). Se relaciona con una comprensión empática ya que el profesor entiende que debe recurrir a lo que sea para que todos aprendan.
      - iv. **Paciencia docente:** responder preguntas reiteradas, por ejemplo
      - v. **Valoración de aporte de alumnos en clases**
      - vi. **Preocupación por etapa vital de los estudiantes** (parte de conocer al alumno).
      - vii. **Enseñanza equitativa:** motivación por asegurar la participación y aprendizaje de todos, independiente de dificultades de aprendizaje o personales.
2. **Conocimiento sobre el alumno:** contar con información sobre los alumnos define en muchos casos la aproximación que tendrá el profesor, el nivel de apoyo y flexibilidad.
3. **Expectativas:** lo que espera el profesor de cada alumno de forma consciente. Se relaciona con cuánto apoyo entregará y si vale la pena hacerlo.
4. **Comunicación con padres:** resulta un factor relevante para que los docentes cambiaran la relación con los alumnos, ya que los padres entregaban información necesaria para que aquellos pudieran generar más apoyo ya sea por dificultades de aprendizaje como por eventos biográficos sensibles (fallecimiento de familiares, por ejemplo).
5. **Reflexividad autobiográfica:** el concepto de reflexividad fue obtenido de Henderson (2001), pero para Bernal-Guerrero y Cárdenas (2009) se trata de razonamientos autobiográficos definidos como: “procesos de autorreflexión donde se evalúan y relacionan las experiencias del pasado y del presente personal, dentro de una coherencia narrativa, con la intención de elaborar el significado de esas experiencias e integrarlas en una historia de vida” (p. 23).
6. **Vocación social** (Sotomayor Cavada & Sevilla, 2013): cuando la razón por la que se eligió estudiar pedagogía tiene un tinte público y de servicio a alumnos desfavorecidos socialmente. Sirve como motivación para proseguir en la carrera y en el ejercicio laboral.
7. **Vocación pedagógica** (Sotomayor Cavada & Sevilla, 2013): cuando se estudia pedagogía fundamentalmente por una motivación por lograr aprendizajes, gusto por los contenidos o por afinidad con los alumnos de ciertas edades.

- 8. Afinidad natural:** sensación de que la relación con cierto profesor fue fluida y sin obstáculos desde el principio. Se asocia a características de personalidad del docente o a acciones específicas de cuidado (cercanía física por ejemplo).
- 9. Equilibrio entre simetría y asimetría:** todos los entrevistados destacaron esta característica de algunos de sus profesores, quienes eran capaces de generar respeto hacia sí mismo pero sin utilizar prácticas desagradables, tales como sanciones injustas o humillaciones. Además, generalmente fueron descritos como docentes que alternaban entre exigir aprendizaje y evaluaciones desafiantes con el uso del humor o del apoyo personal (ayuda en el aula y fuera de ella). A su vez, reconocieron que esto es una meta a lograr con sus estudiantes, y que es uno de los desafíos más importante con los que se han encontrado en sus prácticas profesionales o que creen tener que enfrentar a futuro.
- Rigurosidad compartida con los alumnos
  - Afecto transversal
  - Humor
  - Accesibilidad y disponibilidad
  - Generación de confianza con los estudiantes
    - Seguridad para pedir ayuda
- 10. Docencia como arte indagatorio**
- Equilibrio entre ser investigador y pedagogo
  - Búsqueda activa de metodologías o perspectivas nuevas (en cursos electivos por ejemplo)
- Componentes negativos:
- I. Docencia como qué hacer técnico:** Profesores que saben impartir los contenidos de forma efectiva, pero ignoran los aspectos afectivos y comprensivos inherentes a la relación con sus alumnos. En palabras de Henderson (2001) serían “técnicos bien entrenados” (p.20), pero sin voluntad de creación, de desarrollar su propia formación continua y reflexiva. Los entrevistados se refirieron a profesores que sólo iba a dar cátedra como un simple trabajo sin mayor involucramiento o asistentes de la educación que utilizaban prácticas autoritarias por ser lo más fácil (relatados en experiencias en prácticas profesionales)
- II. Arbitrariedad pedagógica:** refiere a recuerdos de comportamientos docentes que parecen no responder a lógicas razonadas o con objetivos pedagógicos efectivos. Estas prácticas caracterizan por manifestar una despreocupación afectiva por los alumnos.
- Evaluación incoherente con las clases
  - Instruir sólo contenido
  - Impredecibilidad del profesor
  - Sanciones injustas
  - Capricho de cada profesor: clases y evaluaciones
  - Indiferencia al aprendizaje de alumnos
  - Clases despersonalizadas
  - Negación de estilos personales de aprendizaje
  - Prohibiciones arbitrarias
- III. Abuso de poder** (desde profesores particulares o contextos escolares autoritarios): mantiene lejanía ante el alumno, colocándose en un lugar en el que no pueda ser juzgado, y se muestra inaccesible (Covarrubias & Piña, 2004).
- IV. Imposición de identidades:** la escuela genera ideales de alumnos que son identidades particulares (participación en pastoral, alianzas, centro de alumnos, etc...) y se excluyen las distintas.
- V. Negación de estilos personales de aprendizaje:** exigir las mismas habilidades a todos los alumnos y no permitir usar estrategias distintas (ejemplo: escuchar música mientras se ejercitan las matemáticas).
- VI. Negación de identidad:** profesores que se burlan o humillan a alumnos al conocer sus aspiraciones o gustos.
- VII. Uso de fuerza física:** experiencias de uso de la fuerza física, abuso que en cursos menores es mucho más evidente, ya que todo profesor es más fuerte y grande que sus alumnos.
- VIII. Experiencias de humillación pública:** varios entrevistados reportan haber sufrido humillaciones tanto en el aula como en situaciones extracurriculares, coincidentes en ridiculizaciones frente a compañeros u otros profesores asociado a características personales (dificultades de aprendizaje o personalidad).

Figur2. Glossary of characteristics

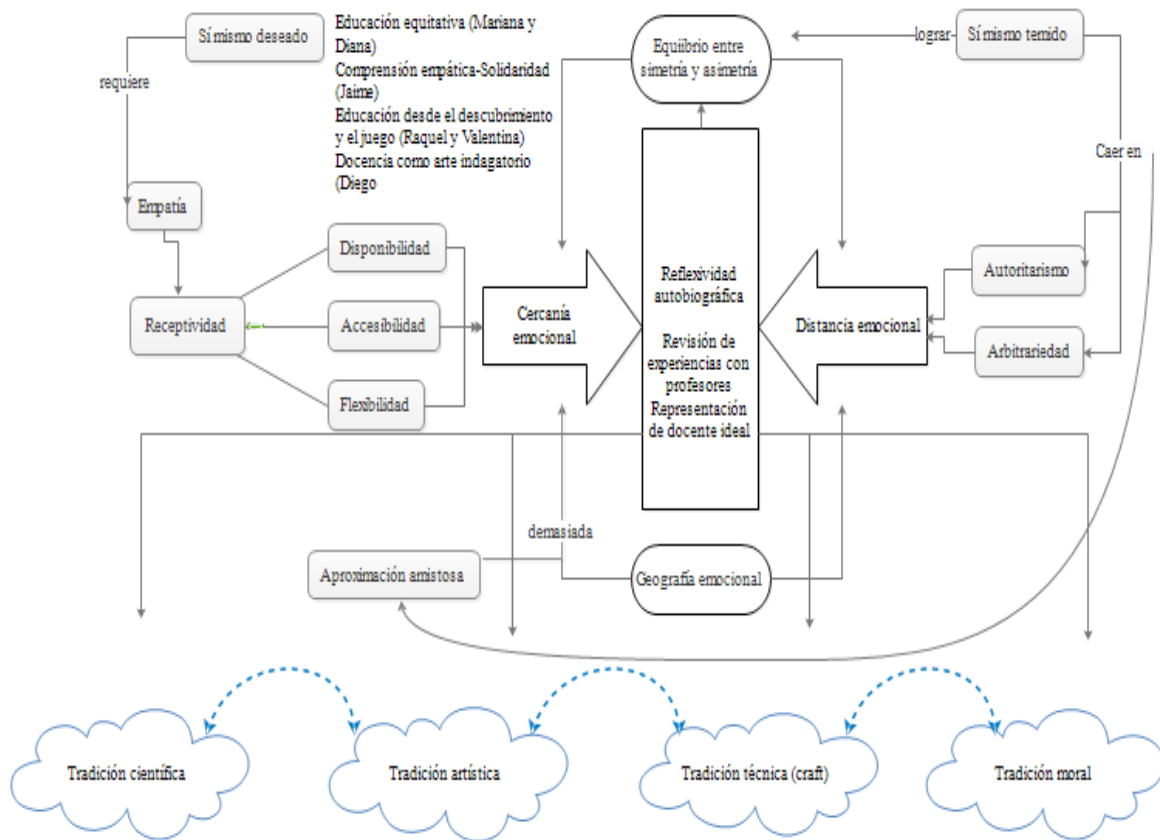


Figure 3. Integrative diagram

Nota: Visualización de conceptos principales en relación. Se presentan los sí mismos deseados y temidos de los entrevistados, que en este caso coincidieron en los ideales de relación, algunos con mayor énfasis que otros. A través de la reflexividad biográfica el docente es capaz de estimar cuánta cercanía o distancia es ideal para el logro de sus objetivos pedagógicos. De esta forma, también puede enmarcarse, con distintos grados de consciencia, en las distintas tradiciones socioculturales de la docencia (científica, artística, técnica y/o moral).