What do Teachers Learn in Their First Year of Practice? Beginning Teachers' Own Experiences

¿Qué aprenden los docentes en su primer año de ejercicio profesional?: representaciones de los propios docentes principiantes

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Abstract

This is a qualitative study that addresses the experiences of beginning teachers regarding the learning that they build in their first year of practice with respect to teaching and learning, testing assumptions of variations depending on the selectivity of the institution and the context of starting to teach. Analyses were performed using the methodology of 'grounded theory', based on the discourse of 11 Chilean beginning teachers in the context of broader research tracking the first three years of their professional practice. However, the results suggest that the assumptions apply, but show certain transversalities that strain the feedback between initial training and the demands of teaching practice, as well as the formative role of experience in a context of debatable quality of initial training, lack of support for beginning teachers, and the effects of a system based on standards, accountability, and individual performance.

Keywords: teacher education, employment, subjectivity, qualitative research, grounded theory

Resumen

Este es un trabajo cualitativo que aborda las representaciones de docentes principiantes acerca de los aprendizajes que construyen en su primer año de ejercicio profesional respecto de la enseñanza y el aprendizaje, tensionando un supuesto relativo a variaciones según la selectividad del programa de formación inicial y según el contexto de iniciación docente. Los análisis se realizan utilizando la metodología de la *teoría fundamentada*, a partir del discurso de once docentes principiantes chilenas, en el contexto de una investigación mayor que hace seguimiento a sus primeros tres años de ejercicio profesional. Los resultados sugieren que el supuesto opera, pero muestran transversalidades que tensionan la retroalimentación entre formación inicial y demandas del ejercicio docente, así como el rol formativo de la experiencia en un escenario de discutible calidad de la formación inicial, la ausencia de acompañamiento en la iniciación y los efectos de un sistema sustentado en estándares, rendición de cuentas y desempeño individual.

Palabras clave: formación de profesores, inserción laboral, subjetividad, investigación cualitativa, teoría fundamentada

Research on the life of teachers indicates that their professional training does not culminate with graduation, and when they start their professional practice begins a stage of learning about teaching which is fundamental for their subsequent performance (Ávalos, Carlson, & Aylwin, 2004).

Marcelo (1988) conceives teacher training as a continuous, systematic and organized process, covering the whole of the teaching career and consisting of several stages, among which the initiation phase in the practice is particularly critical for professional development. The *professional insertion* assumes the transition process from teacher training to an independent professional, as part of a continuum of professional development (Cornejo, 1999; Flores, 2008; Marcelo, 2009). This stage extends from three (Imbernón, 1994) to five years (Ávalos et al., 2004) and is characterized as «a period of tensions and intensive learning in contexts usually unknown, and during which beginner teachers must acquire professional knowledge as well as maintain a certain personal balance» (Marcelo, 2009, p. 5).

The literature describes that beginner teachers undergo a multiplicity of situations not covered in the initial training, and that appear only in the actual situation of teaching practice (Ávalos, 2009; Marcelo, 1991; Veenman, 1984); and although it is true that some best practical experiences and contact with schools during teacher training can advance this learning, these are not able to replace what is likely to be learned only in the very situation of teaching (Ávalos et al., 2004; Borko, 2004).

The literature has also described keys, tasks and knowledge that constitute specific learning of teaching initiation (Feiman-Nemser, 2001; Marcelo, 2009); nevertheless, specific and placed learnings that are constructed from different formative models and contexts of professional insertion have been less explored.

In a national context like the Chilean, of deep inequality and social and educational segmentation, a study of this nature is of particular interest, considering the relevancy of studying beginner teachers in a contextual and placed manner (Ávalos, 2009; Eirín, García, & Montero, 2009).

In this scenario, at least two questions arise: What representations beginner teachers have about what they learn with respect to teaching and learning in their first year of professional practice?, and, considering the Chilean context, what are the differences in these representations according to the training received and the initiation context? —given the different available training offers, having different requirements for entering to teaching careers, and the actual teaching initiation contexts, distinctively different, characterized by a strong socio-economic segregation, and whose regulation falls primarily on the market and its standards, mechanisms of competition and accountability, and of individual incentives—.

The working hypothesis suggests that the selectivity of the training programs (and thus, the characteristics of students of pedagogy resulting from their socio-economic and cultural capital origin), and the characteristics of the context of teacher initiation, affect the representations that beginner teachers have created about teaching and learning.

Some conceptual referents

Initial teacher training and professional initiation

Marcelo (2006) and Orland-Barak (2008) point out that new teachers perceive that the necessary teaching knowledge that different types of schools require are not being integrated during initial training. In general, they express a big dissatisfaction with current institutions of formation the ability to answer to the needs of the teaching profession. The criticisms focus on its bureaucratic organization, the disconnect between theory and practice, the excessive fragmentation of knowledge which is taught, and the scarce connection with schools (Feinman-Nemser, 2001). In Chile, this situation is endorsed by the Commission on Initial Teacher Training (Mineduc/OEI[1], 2005) and the Panel of Experts (Mineduc, 2010) and is shaped in the debates about the quality of initial teacher training and the education of graduates.

Evaluations as applied to future teachers (INICIA[2]) put in evidence that there are multiple challenges in this area, including the segregation that transcends schools, reaching training institutions and being perpetuated in the schools as places of work, in a circle of segmentation characterized by teachers whose schools of origin have similar selectivity and prestige characteristics to the initial training institutions attended to pursue teaching careers, and then they insert professionally into educational institutions of the same characteristics (Meckes & Bascopé, 2012; Ruffinelli & Guerrero, 2009).

The results of this test —which have been criticized for its voluntary bias, non-representativeness, and misalignment with explicit learning objectives— are considered by the same program as ‹worrying›, as they indicate that the majority of the recent education graduates do not have the minimum knowledge needed to perform well in this test. The last measurement (2012)[3], 60% received the rating of "insufficient" in the area of disciplinary knowledge, and more than one third achieved results of the same type in pedagogical knowledge, noting a great variability in levels of achievement according to forming institution, evidence of circular routes previously designated, showing future teachers a heterogeneity in their achievements at the level of knowledge that is associated with the socio-economic origin, in a basic scenario of precariousness.

In contrast, and from the teachers' perspective, other national research suggests the presence of high levels of satisfaction with the initial formation and their own performance among beginner teachers. However, it also suggests that the selectivity of the training programs and the context of teaching initiation are linked to differentiated training weaknesses (Ruffinelli, 2013).

Teacher initiation and context

The macro context: national and international. Ávalos (2013) points out that while it is true that the action in the field of teaching has a specificity on which teachers must act based on their preparation and expert judgment (Abbott, 1988; Ávalos, 2013), this field is vulnerable to changes in fundamental structures such as the curriculum, ways of managing the educational system, and the level of external prescription on how to teach (Ávalos, 2013; Tenti Fanfani, 2006).

Darling-Hammond (2012) points out that the overcrowding of the school system in the knowledge society has put nations at the crossroads of opting for educational reforms essentially of two types: a) based on equity and the development of capacities, and b) based on accountability and incentives. The first ones make up intellectually challenging educational systems, based on a reflective curriculum and the promotion of complex and collaborative skills, backed by a high level of teacher qualification and accountability systems of permanent evaluation, for the purpose of feedback and capabilities improvement. The other reform group is linked to school governance based on strategies of market competition.

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[1]   Mineduc: Ministry of Education, Chile; OEI: Organization of Latin American States for Education, Science and Culture.
[2]   The test INICIA is a paper and pencil test, non-binding, that education graduates voluntarily take (primary education, early childhood and, starting in 2012, secondary education) from Chilean institutions in fields of disciplinary, pedagogical and written communication knowledge, to assess the quality of initial teacher training.
[3]   Mineduc (2013).

It incorporates national exams based on extrinsic motivation, developing a school work to answer such evidence, leading to a narrowing of the curriculum and teaching individualization and de-professionalization (remove the professional nature of the profession), reducing investment in teacher training and unlinking it from the academia. Chile is one of the countries that have guided its educational reform in this regard.

The micro context: environment and educational institution. Feinman-Nemser (2001) raises the issue that teachers who are new have two tasks to fulfill: teach and learn to teach, taking into account that fundamental aspects of teaching can only be acquired in practice. For Marcelo (2009), there are five fundamental tasks to be developed:

> Learn about the students, the curriculum and the school context; properly design the curriculum and teaching; begin to develop a teaching repertoire that allows them to survive as a teacher; create a community of learning in the classroom and continue developing a professional identity. The problem is that this must be done with the same responsibilities that more experienced teachers (Marcelo, 2009, p. 6).

The TALIS[4] study corroborates this last idea (Jensen, Sandoval-Hernández, Knoll, & González, 2012).

Some authors identify the initiation phase with three dimensions in (dis)agreement: a) the characteristics of initial training, b) the school context characteristics where the beginner teacher is inserted, and c) forms of support and the presence or absence of mentoring or other support that «smooth» the process (Cornejo, 1999; Ingersoll & Strong, 2011; Marcelo, 2009; Tynjälä & Heikkinen, 2011).

Ávalos et al. (2004) indicate that teachers face demands in the real practice, have more or less supports, and ask questions which receive or not an answer, elements that are interpreted by the teacher in a process that modifies their professional identity, in more or less alignment with their initial training. From this perspective, the literature points out that (Marcelo, 2006) neither the initial training program nor the educational system or type of school in which teachers work, are not important for their professional reconfiguration purposes (Ávalos, 2009).

Thus, several studies show that teachers assume different perspectives of themselves, of their ability to teach, of their satisfaction with the profession, and of the strategies to address the early years when working in contexts characterized by different ways of addressing their curricular projects, relationships between teachers, support for beginner teachers, and working conditions (Ávalos, 2009; Lam & Yan, 2011; Long, Halla, Conwaya, & Murphya, 2012).

Lortie (1975) indicates that it is learning in solitude, reason why it would be an experiential learning. Evidence about school cultures suggests that there are scarce support practices and that younger teachers are overworked and they are "mold» in relation to the dynamics and practices determined by the school institution (Ávalos, 2009). Additionally, it is observed that educational centers tend to lack an effective and sustained accompaniment and support in their initiation and teaching socialization (Cornejo, 2008).

A national study (Ruffinelli, 2014)[5] suggests that the majority of the surveyed beginner teachers do not receive special support from the educational institution in which they start, even almost a third of them point out that the main obstacle to their initiation was to have had "to cope alone". In this sense, the literature recognizes that teaching induction processes have been insufficiently researched. However, the level of development of the field allows observing the benefits in countries offering such support (Menter et al., 2010; OCDE, 2009).

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[4]   Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), is an international survey developed by the OECD. The document gives an account of the experience of the new teachers, according to survey applied in two countries in 2008.

[5]   Study results based on 890 beginner teacher graduates of 23 Chilean institutions of higher education, and 232 of their employers or their direct supervisors, within the framework of the sub-line of teacher initial training of the Center of Research of Policies and Practices in Education (CEPPE, for its initials in Spanish), funded by the National Commission of Science and Technology (Conicyt, for its initials in Spanish).

Methodology

The present study is inscribed within the framework of one more qualitative research[6] and gives an account of the analysis of a corpus that is part of the inquiry, corresponding to interviews conducted in 2012 to eleven primary teachers trained in Chile, towards the end of their first year of professional insertion[7]. The novice teachers were selected according to criteria of viability and relevance for research purposes, taking care to cover the diversity with regard to selectivity in training programs, and the heterogeneity of teaching initiation contexts. The teachers were trained in six institutions: five of them did it in selective programs, five others in programs of low selectivity, and one in a non-selective program[8], and began professionally in different school contexts, in terms of social and economic vulnerability and demands, and teacher support by the educational institutions. This information is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1
Basic characterization of the cases under study

Faculty	IES (1)	Selectivity (2)	Accreditation (yrs.) (3)	Specialty	Dependency (4)	NS School (5)	Exper. faculty/months	Special practice (6)	Hours (7)	Demands (8)	Support (9)	Role
1					PS	B	3	Yes	40	D	MD	Classroom assistance Language and Comp. 1º to 4º, Computer teacher 3º to 8º
2	C1	A	4	Language	PS	B	6	No	40	B	MD	All teachers in subsectors 3º, Lead teacher 3°, Language workshop teacher 2º cycle
3					PS/R	MB	6	Yes	40	A	MD	Language and Comp. 2º cycle
4				Math	PS/R	M	10	Yes	41	A	A	Math teacher 5°, Lead teacher 5°
5	C2	A	6		PP	A	3	Yes	6	B	MD	Math teacher 6º
6				Language	PS/R	MA	6	No	40	D	D	History teacher, Natural Science, Technology Ed.., Art Ed., and Orientation 3º, Lead teacher 3º, History teacher 4º, Remedial Language Workshop teacher 1º to 8º
	P1	B	6									
7				Math	PS	MB	6	Yes	34	A	A	Math teacher 2º cycle, SIMCE workshop teacher 7º, Natural Science teacher 5º and 6º
8	P2	B	5	Language	PP/R	A	8	Yes	28	D	D	Language and Comp. 5º y 6º
9				Math	PS	M	5	No	42	A	MD	Math teacher 5º and 6º, Natural Science teacher 7º and 8º
	P3	B	3									
10				No	PS/R	MB	3	No	25	A	D	Language and Composition 4º and 8º
11	I	NS	3	Language	M	MB	11	No	9	D	D	Extended day assistance and Language and Math leveling 1º y 2º

(1) Higher Education Institution: C: university belonging to the Council of Rectors (CRUCH); P: private university; I: professional institute.
(2) Formative program selectivity: A: high, B: low, NS: non selective
(3) Years of accreditation of the elementary program (2 to 7 years)
(4) PS: private subsidized institution; PP: private institution paid; M: municipal institution with public funding.
(5) NSE: students socioeconomic level that attend the school: B: low; M: medium; A: high; Mb: medium-low; MA: medium-high.
(6) The teacher works preferably in their specialty area at the institution: yes, no.
(7) Contracted teaching hours.
(8) Level of institutional demands to the teacher: A: high; D: unstructured, B: low.
(9) Level of institutional support to the teacher: A: high; D: weak; MD: very weak.

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[6] Inquiry about employability aimed to measure the role of teaching initiation in the continuum of the initial training, the dynamics of the difficulties, learning and adjustment to the real demands of the practice, according to contexts of initiation and selectivity of the training programs, through a follow-up of three years.
[7] All were females, as it was not possible to have male volunteers.
[8] Selective programs: those whose average scores on the test of college selection (PSU) in the past six years have been equal or above 550 points, above the mean of 500 points for the instrument; programs of low selectivity: those whose average PSU scores in the past six years are placed between the 450 to 549 points, around the mean of the instrument; non-selective programs: those whose average PSU scores over the last six years have been less than 450 points or do not demand accountability from PSU.

The study used in depth teacher interviews, aligned with studies about the subjectivity of the actor, and particularly from the social representations perspective, understood as the ability of an individual or a group to attribute meaning to their behaviors and understand reality through their own system of references.

Moscovici (1996) proposes that social representations constitute value systems, ideas and practices whose functions are: a) to establish an order of guiding the subject in their social and material world, and b) to allow communication between members of a community, in terms of a code for social exchange, and to unequivocally identify the elements of the world, in their individual and group history.

The interviews were developed following the observation that teachers made about two of their own classes, filmed with their consent, with the idea that the videos constitute learning tools, helping to promote professional awareness (Blomberg, Sherin, Renkl, Glogger, & Seidel, 2014; Yaffe, 2010).

The analysis was performed using *grounded theory* procedures, whose origins are in *symbolic interactionism*, school of thought based on the interpretive paradigm, oriented to the analysis of the meaning of social action from the perspective of the participants, a perspective that the researcher tries to reconstruct developing a theory to explain the practice from the principles delivered by the participants who have experienced a particular phenomenon or process, from the experience meaning of those involved (Strauss & Corbin, 1998)[9].

Data is encoded and then grouped in families of codes from a common criteria or shared characteristic of the code group, giving origin to the properties of the phenomenon under study. Dimensions are described for these properties and are organized in order to account for the complexity of the phenomenon (the learning built), from the discourse of the actors involved, in a given context, based on their background and conditions involved, the strategies that are deployed under these conditions, and the consequences of such strategies.

Results

Representations of first year initiation learnings

From the analysis eight learning properties arise reported during the first year of professional practice. These categories are hierarchical by criterion of decreasing density in the table that follows, along with its dimensions. That is why the *practical pedagogical knowledge*[10] is the type of learning more frequently reported by the total group of teachers in the study, being far from the *lesson planning learning*.

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[9] Four fundamental analytical categories are developed: to) causal conditions or factors causing the phenomenon; (b) strategies, or actions taken in response; (c) intervening conditions, or situational factors influencing the strategies; and (d) consequences or results of using such strategies; built using the *constant comparative method*, which collects recursively new information in a constant process of comparison with emerging categories.

[10] Practical knowledge is defined as "procedural information that is useful for everyday life" (Marcelo, 1991). A distinctive feature of this knowledge is that it is linked to the action, so it is important to emphasize the experimental character inherent in any process of teaching and, therefore, to the work of the teacher. From this perspective, to teach is to constantly test different strategies in order to produce something (Alliaud & Antelo, 2009).

Table 2
Beginner teacher representations about what they learn about teaching and learning in their first year of professional practice

Categories	Properties	Dimensions
Reported learning about teaching and learning	Practical pedagogical knowledge	Contextual restrictions (material conditions and students' characteristics) Ask for help to colleagues Work under pressure/ disillusionment Work with rigid protocols Need to utilize time effectively in the classroom
	Lesson planning	Real planning is simpler What was learned in the FID works You learn to plan utilizing the school model It is not important because it is given, you only have to execute it What was learned in the FID is obsolete
	Class management	Class moments management: beginning/motivation, closure Process standardization (work with guides, individual, seated, stay in place) Behavioral management and critical situations, voice Role empowerment
	Specific pedagogical knowledge	Math teaching methodology Teaching strategies of colleagues or self-learning Creation of materials and tests Group work doesn't work: creates disorder
	Disciplinary knowledge	Content search in the internet Questions to colleagues
	Learning evaluation	FID learning doesn't work Importance of feedback and monitoring Monitoring learning progress
	General pedagogical knowledge	Other school professionals and colleagues pedagogical strategies
	Curriculum	-

Note: Source: own elaboration.

The analysis according to selectivity of the formative program and initiation context suggests that the first year of teaching learnings reported are mediated by the context of initiation, by background conditions, and conditions involved.

Figure 1. Learning of first year teacher initiation about teaching and learning. Source: own elaboration.

Figure 1 shows that, in terms of context, they are key for the type of learning built according to the level of students' vulnerability, the level of focus on compliance with standards that exist in the educational institution of initiation, the level of work requirements of the institution, and the level of support granted in compliance with these requirements. Among background conditions, the following aspects are relevant: the level of selectivity of the training program, the provisions and personal skills, and the set of features in the context of initiation, while the intervening conditions include the nature of the support received.

Depending upon if the initiation takes place in one or other conditions, beginner teachers deploy different strategies to face difficulties —generally student management—, and some teachers resort to other members of the school community: (a) ask for help from their direct supervisor, suggestive of a hierarchical school culture; (b) request informal support from peers or other professionals of the institution, suggestive of a low level of institutionalization of horizontal and interdisciplinary learning —and both cases suggestive of lack of collaborative learning instances—, and other strategies characterized by frequent solitary solutions search, mainly linked to access to disciplinary contents and learning activities: internet searches, transversely recurrent strategy, both for study of contents and to find teaching resources, and searches in school textbooks, for similar purposes.

Finally, and depending on the way in which the elements described are configured, one or other consequences are generated in terms of learning of a different kind. In this way, a teacher can bring learning at the level of *practical knowledge*, learning that the context may restrict, like in the case of school requirements:

...because here, how the method is, we cannot do other things, as well as create and everything, thus there is very little left for us to do: «here is the module that I give you, these are the guidelines that I give you, and you have to do this». Then, trying to do many things you can't... that is, for example, I occupy the materials, I occupy them in a class because as I almost do it in private, because when they used to come to see me [classroom observation] it was like, let›s see the module... then..., it is complicated (Teacher 2, formed in selective program, high demand, and high support).

Alternatively, you can report learning in the context of the *lesson plans*, for example, learning that lesson planning in the teaching practice is much simpler than what was learned in the initial training:

I think it is something that they assumed that it was going to happen and that in practice I have not seen, that it was covering a huge amount of planning types, maybe it had their background, and maybe they were useful to me, and I'm not realizing it. I must be fair, but I feel that it was too much, and at the end what is utilized is the linear, but they are not very complicated planning, because schools try to simplify it because they feel that teachers are dumb, and they look down on them, and give them a simpler and linear work (Teacher 9, formed in a selective program, dysfunctional demand, and very weak support).

Similarly, they may report learning about class management, for example, the need to focus on the fulfilment of the school demands on standardization:

...a bit of disorder occurred at the end, when they began to stand up and, well, I count up to... up to three, and they are all seated, but that of having to stand up, at my school they don't allow me that... When they begin to stand up, I start to count, and they already know that they have to be seated... then whenever I have an instance for them of working in group, I can do it, although sometimes... I get it as a challenge, as it was very messy... they are very used to a very standardized work, then, it has been hard for me to break this scheme that students share, for students to work in group, a chaos is formed... As if it cost them too much, as if they are coming from first grade with work standards based on SIMCE, with a lot of multiple choice tests... much... guide, guide, guide, guide... (Teacher 3, formed in low selectivity, high demand, and high support program).

Similarly, they could report learnings about *evaluation*, relating, for example, to the low utility of what was learned in the initial training, given the school demands:

...I really liked the course on special educational needs, that course I found it very good, but we cannot... bring much of it to the teaching practice, because it also has to do with part of the system, I mean, it evaluates all children equally, because it has to do with the system, that is, students are evaluated equally, it doesn't matter the amount of time, and what they have learned, because it has to be done, we have to comply the issue of evaluation, for example, at the university authentic assessment is promoted, but here, they only accept one unconventional grade, the rest are all tests... for example, assessment for learning, and therefore we end up only evaluating learning, the end result, if they learned or not, o.k.? For example... evaluation is promoted at all times, monitor the work that children perform in the classroom, utilize scoring guidelines, rubrics...and perform a more formative assessment, OK? And here it cannot be done (Teacher 4, formed in low selectivity, dysfunctional demand, and weak support program).

Also they could report learning in terms of *disciplinary knowledge*, for example, related to a compensation of weaknesses through self-management:

I feel that I have done my level of content management, it didn't come rooted, although I learned many things in school, but really everything that I use at the moment is something I have to study before showing it to my students. In fact, I believe that this year I have learned much in that knowledge area, in fact they were my great fears to face the world of education and do classes, because, what if there are things that suddenly I don't know?, what if a child tells me: «Teacher, what about this? », and I...? It›s like sometimes they ask me things and sometimes I really have to analyze them first: «Give me a minute, I'll answer immediately». Then I first analyze those things and then I answer them because, in fact, I have also been building my knowledge in this (Teacher 11, formed in selective program, high demand, and very weak support).

Alternatively, they could report learning in *specific pedagogical knowledge*, for example, teaching strategies, through self-management and basically searches on the internet:

...what happens is that in the book appears that we must see the subordinate sentences, then I couldn't cover that, unless they had understood the other, then we started from the basis, subject and predicate, what is a direct modifier, and we cover that until now, because after we saw the subject modifiers and then the predicate modifiers, they got very confused. So, on the one hand that day they didn't understand anything. Later I returned to it, and then I found some videos on YouTube that explained the subject modifier and explain it by parts, direct and indirect way, and I used those videos. So first we saw the explanation of the girl and then there was another example (Teacher 10, formed in low selectivity, high demand, and weak support program).

Finally, they could report learning in terms of *general pedagogical knowledge*, for example, of trial and error strategy for learning how to teach:

> ...I think that now I have learned how to teach, because when one is doing the professional practices, of course, one intervenes within the course, but only in the way the guiding teacher wants. Then, when one is in charge, one says: «well, here I figure out how to do it, how I face... you learn by trying and making mistakes and there you modify your approaches» (Teacher 8, formed in low selectivity, high demand, very weak support program).

Learning representations of first year of teacher initiation trained in selective programs

Figure 2 shows the learnings from the first year of teaching practice reported by teachers trained in selective programs, depending on the type of professional initiation context.
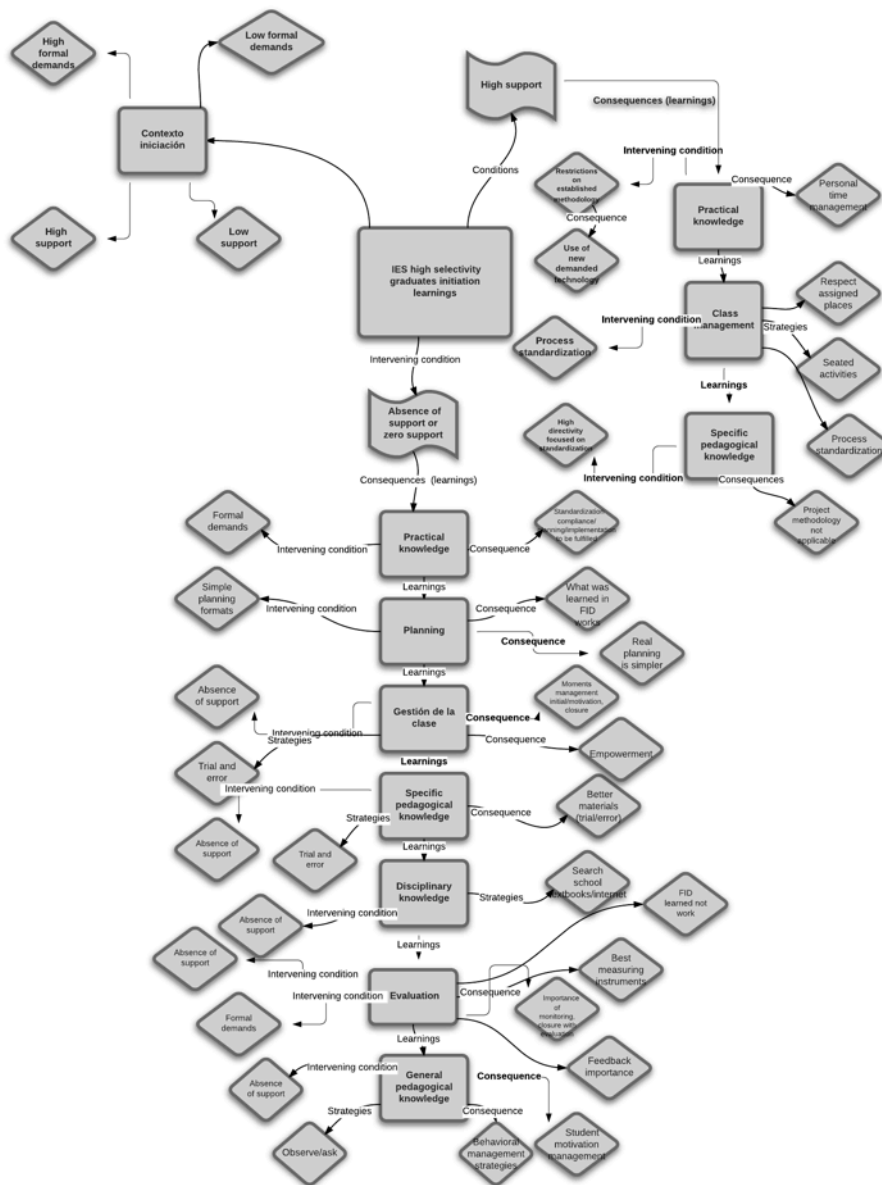

Figure 2. Learning of selective IES graduates in their first year of teaching initiation about teaching and learning. Source: own elaboration.

The findings suggest that these learnings are built within seven areas, being always *practical knowledge* the most significant. Learning reports vary according to conditions or backgrounds of the beginner teacher and the teaching initiation context. The conditions include the selectivity of the training program, personal provisions, and the nature of the initiation context. From this last one derive categories that explain the variations in learning: the level of vulnerability of students served; the level of institution focus in standardization, normalization or exclusively formal protocols; the level of work demands, and the level of support received.

Depending on the conditions involved (formal, informal, weak or non-existent support), beginner teachers build learning from different sources: their peers (in an informal way), their direct supervisors, other professionals (psychologists and educational psychologists), internet and textbooks. These strategies generate learning construction reports relevant to the seven above-mentioned areas.

Beginner teachers trained in selective programs report learning in a greater variety of areas when levels of initiation and teaching support are very weak compared with those beginner teachers whose initiation contexts offer high levels of support to the teaching task. The nature of learning outcomes reported in both cases also differs. When it comes to supportive contexts, learning relating to the standardization of students can be seen. In this scenario, after learning in *practical teaching knowledge* it is reported *class management* learning and *specific pedagogical knowledge*.

In terms of *practical knowledge*, *personal time management* is highlighted, linked to learn how to spend less time at the beginning of work demands, that are perceived to be excessive for the contracted time, and when the institution uses specific teaching methodologies, teachers report to learn didactic restriction. In other words, it implies abandoning strategies learned in their training.

Reports on learning from class management are linked to the normalization of the students' behavior in response to institutional demands. They learn to opt for activities in which students remain seated, or by not altering the arrangement of the room defined by the head teacher, to optimize the rate of progress in the contents, and the maintenance of order and silence in the room, valued by the institutions.

Finally, in terms of *specific pedagogical knowledge*, and in accordance with the previously described learning, the group that starts with more demands and variable support report learning that constructivist teaching methodologies are not feasible —such as projects—, arguing that their students are accustomed to more directive teaching methodologies (such as lectures class and individual work with guides), and helping them to maintain order and silence that are required in their classroom, along with time optimization that they value as not enough to cover the curriculum.

In the case of teachers trained in selective institutions that begin in contexts that provide a very weak support to the teaching task, learning linked to standardization demands is observed, and with greater freedoms in the pedagogical field, which are translated to the use of a greater variety of strategies that are being tested with trial and error mechanisms, whose validation depends on the direct effects seen in students, evaluated using their own available analytical tools. In this context, in terms of practical knowledge, these teachers demonstrate learning to meet a series of requirements that they perceived as formal in the planning, the implementation of classes and evaluations, although they do not consider them substantive in their practice.

With regard to *lesson planning*, teachers mentioned that they learn that planning is much simpler than what they learned during their initial training, since the formats used by the institutions are simpler and seem to primarily play a bureaucratic role. From this perspective, they recognize that what they learned in the initial training is useful, but it is excessive, as it far exceeds the real school demands, reason why they discard the more complex model learned in their initial training.

With respect to the *class management*, the lack of support seems to generate trial and error strategies that improve class moments management, achieving more success in motivating their students at the beginning and achieving best closures, by having better time management, while becoming empowered in their role.

In terms of *specific pedagogical knowledge*, the same lack of support seems to be linked to reports of learning about the elaboration of the best materials and pedagogical resources. Similarly, in these

conditions, they indicate the acquisition of disciplinary knowledge through searches on the internet or in textbooks.

Reports on *evaluation* learning show a higher incidence of school, which even —when technical support is weak —make important demands in this area, which teachers often resolved by trial and error or watching their peers, reporting that they manage to build better tools, and learn the value of the monitoring of learning progress class to class, incorporating, for example in the closing, evaluation strategies in order to know and communicate those progresses.

Finally and as a result, in terms of reports relating to *general pedagogical knowledge* learning, these are related to behavior management strategies and student motivation, and are being built mainly by consulting with their peers.

Learning representations of first year teachers' initiation trained in programs of low selectivity or non-selective

Both types of selectivity are gathered in the analysis, since the findings do not significantly differ between the two groups. Figure 3 shows the first year of teaching practice learnings reported by teachers trained in programs of low selectivity or not selective, depending on the type of the professional initiation context.

There were no contextual initiation conditions with high levels of support, only weak or very weak, under conditions of formal requirements both low and high, showing learning very similar between support weak and very weak. They report their learning with the same seven categories identified above, although with a greater frequency of learning involved, particularly in the field of practical knowledge.
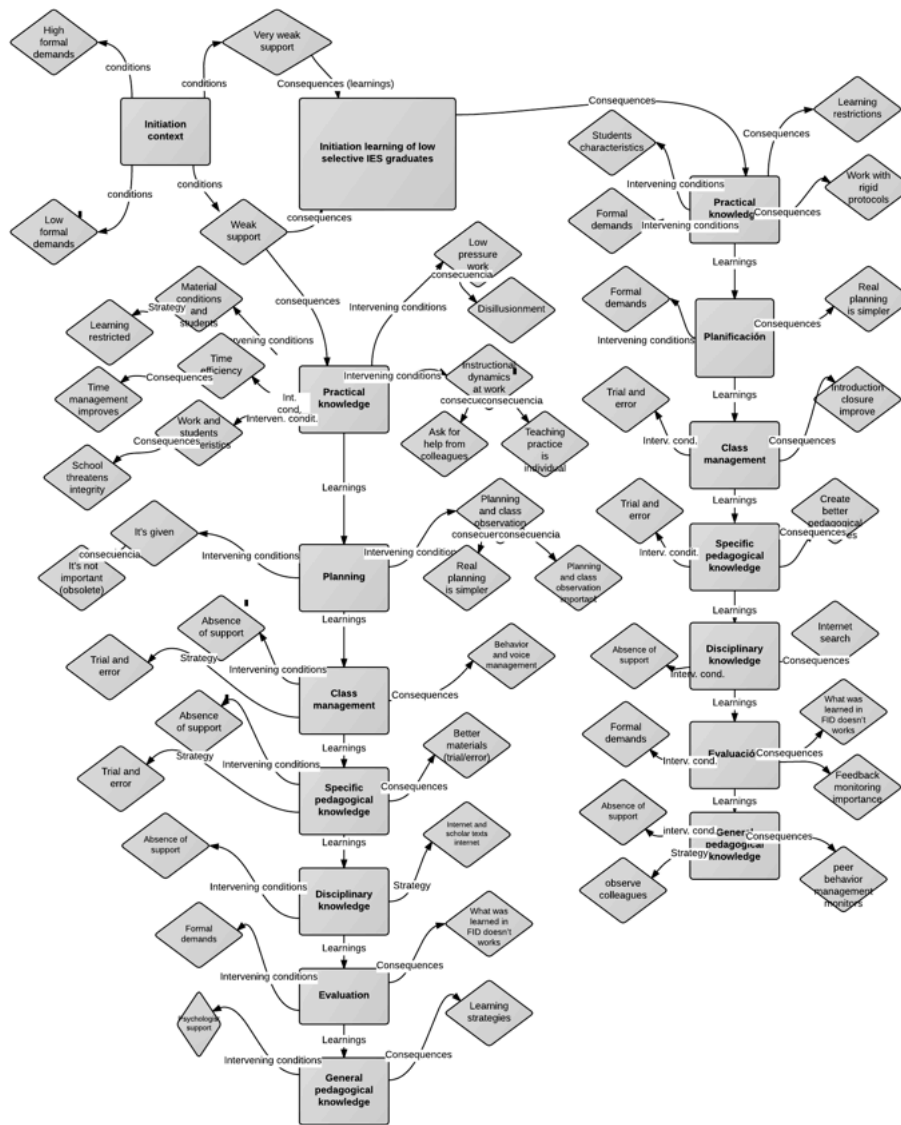
Figure 3. Learning of low selective IES graduates in their first year of teaching
initiation about teaching and learning. Source: own elaboration.

When there is weak support, in terms of practical knowledge, they indicate that the material conditions in which they work (which tend to be linked to a greater social vulnerability in the case of teachers trained in selective programs), coupled with the characteristics of social and economic vulnerability of their students, they are forced to restrict the curriculum, which adds to the need to make an effective use of time, which has an effect of better management of it.

In practical knowledge, it always appears a vein of learning linked to institutional dynamics in a context of weak support, resulting in learning that teaching is individual in nature, to what some teachers choose to ask for help to a peer. However, when there is too much pressure, coupled with high vulnerability of students, learning becomes disillusionment with the profession, and in some cases it points out that working conditions and students characteristics endanger teacher integrity, in terms of physical and mental health.

In terms of learning outcomes with respect to *lesson planning*, there are two realities: when the schedules used for teaching are imposed, they learn that lesson planning lacks relevance, evaluating what they

learned in their initial training as obsolete. On the other hand, when the school requires periodic plans and incorporates classroom observation, they report learning that these activities are important, although they recognize anyway that real planning is simpler than what they learned in their initial training.

With respect to learning about *class management*, they indicate that, through trial and error, they have learned to manage the behavior of students using the more traditional strategies (giving orders, shouting, etc.), while for the *specific pedagogical knowledge*, they mention that they have learned to develop better teaching resources, also by trial and error; and when the training program is not selective, they report having learned specific teaching strategies (e.g., reading) by trial and error. Meanwhile, the training disciplinary weaknesses, coupled with institutional lack of support, generate a cross-search strategy of disciplinary knowledge on the internet, noting that this type of knowledge is learned over time.

When there are other professionals in the institution, it seems to emerge the possibility of acquiring *general pedagogical knowledge*: some teachers say that they have learned teaching strategies from the psychologist. With respect to the *evaluation of learning*, frequently they believe that the institutional requirements are different from what they learned in their initial training: If the training was in terms of assessment for learning, the institution is aimed at a more traditional assessment of learning, so they consider that what was learned has no real value.

Discussion and conclusions

The findings are aligned with the specialized literature regarding the role of initiation in the configuration of a learning set that are characteristic of this stage, suggesting that these learnings are mediated by the context of initiation and the selectivity of the training program.

However, data also suggests the construction of a set of cross learning that account for the penetration of standards and schools' accountability practices, permeating initiated teacher learning, those who experience a lack of agreement with the learning of initial training —such as those relating to teaching planning, collaborative and participatory methodologies, and learning assessment—, which would not always find a place in school culture, and would force them to relearn what is useful to make good use of time, meet curricular coverage, and perform on external tests.

Transversely, and as noted by the literature, the majority of the teachers reported learning about practical knowledge, and some learn that context restricts its pedagogical action, either from the school methodological requirements and/or from the characteristics of their students (particularly when it comes to teachers trained in less selective programs than are inserted into contexts with little support), narrowing the curriculum to enhance the probability that some students from more disadvantaged can learn the minimum.

Similarly, a group of teachers learn that *teacher planning requirements* are less demanding in real practice, than what they learned in their initial training. This translates into abandonment of more complex models, which suggests that such models do not offer real support to their work, reason why, if they are not required, these are replaced by institutional formats, either by its questionable practical use or their persistent lack of time indicated by beginner teachers, whose strength is so powerful that it would not offset the benefit of professional planning the way it was learned in the initial training.

Another report of frequent learning is about the *class management*. The focus is placed on student behavioral management and compliance with school requirements (for example, work with guides, individually, seated, clear presence of the three moments of the class, etc.). Similarly, there is a tendency to compensate for disciplinary shortcomings with searches on the internet or in school textbooks.

With regard to learning about *evaluation*, it is also observed a cross group for which what was learned during the initial formation seem not to be perceived as useful for a school that focuses in the evaluation of learning, instead of learning, and of outcomes more than of processes. Only teachers formed in selective programs show learnings linked to a wide and permanent concept of evaluation.

Finally, there is the recurrence of learning by trial and error, assuming success based on their effects. This mechanism appears to operate most frequently in contexts where there is fewer support and more freedoms and/or less formal requirements, spaces valued by the beginners, where experience seems to weigh more. However, with regard to educational deficits (in disciplinary aspects, behavioral, etc.) these trials could involve a risk to professional consolidation, as tests not necessarily are based on pedagogical knowledge built in initial training, nor they are carried out with relevant knowledge, therefore what is considered a successful outcome may not be one from a pedagogical perspective.

The disaggregated analysis according to selectivity and context also offers tracks for a look at our option of educational reform, our initial training system, and the absence of initiation induction policies. The characteristics of the context seem to have an impact as forming attitudes, behaviors, strategies and learning more or less linked to the normalization of the students, around the achievement of results in external examinations, in a climate of order and clear structure of the class, while the selectivity of the training program seems to permeate its effects both from its greater or lesser focus on structure and directivity —resulting more or less compatible with the school— as from profiling students from entering to training programs, with higher or lower capabilities at entry, and considering this capital as a constitutive element of a formative process.

The findings suggest that teachers trained in selective programs account for a smaller range of learning experiences as well as in a lower range of dimensions, compared with graduates from less selective teacher programs, probably due to their greater capabilities at the start of the training allowing them to take better

advantage of an initial training, probably more privileged, creating a possible minor effect of experiential learning that when operating in highly structured contexts, offers less room for trial and error.

From this perspective, it can be presumed that teachers trained in less selective programs are inserted in contexts that provide weak support to teaching, particularly in less regulated institutions, they register a greater amount of learning in greater and diverse areas, especially in practical knowledge, probably from a reduced availability of abilities at the beginning of the training, that would not allow them to take advantage of it and, perhaps, coupled with a questionable educational quality, would make them more open to the initiation experience as a construction of knowledge necessary for the practice, given the possibility of testing and validating the tests with not necessarily pedagogical criteria.

This point requires a reflection on the role of experience —and particularly the mediated experience— in the construction of the teacher professional learning. Regardless of the selectivity of the training program and the context for beginning teaching, all beginner teachers build fundamental learning for their performance at this stage, which is part of their initial training. However, the unregulated and heterogeneous national training model, which has given important precarious signs, coupled with a solitary initiation model, that lacks of institutional support from training institutions or from schools, provides a risk scenario for teaching consolidation from a non-professional experience, loaded with provisions, which many times is faced with conditions of inadequate general competences, pedagogical knowledge, and reflective capacity, mediated by an initiation process, which is very likely to result in trials that are validated based on instrumental criteria, labeling strategies such as successes or failures without appropriate tests (Darling-Hammond, 2006).

Therefore, it is evident the importance of a solid training and the need to secure it in all educational institutions, the importance of the accompaniment to the initiation as a mediator of professional learning, and the need for coherence between the initial training and the school demands, focusing on comprehensive and meaningful learning.

Simultaneously, there is the need to deepen the research linking the learning opportunities of the initial training with the demands of the teaching practice, appealing to the initial training in its professional ideology who by definition should be autonomous, effective, reflective and critical, ideology that it is under tension by a few non-professional school demands that seem to transcend the initiation to the teaching profession.

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