The Professional Practice of Beginning Teachers in Primary Education in Mexico. A Case of Study in Monterrey, Nuevo León, Mexico

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Abstract: Within the framework of experiences of teaching reflection on professional practice, the research arose from the need to know what is the professional practice of beginning teachers in primary education and what kind of factors and problems are incidental to its exercise. The general objective is to explore and describe the characteristics of the professional practice of the beginning teachers, identifying the allelic dimensional factors that intervene in them, as well as the problems they face in the classroom. The theoretical framework of the study places the responsibilities of the beginning teacher in the teaching task; the qualitative methodology of descriptive type allowed the analysis of information through interviews, observations and focus groups to a sample of 15 beginning primary school teachers from the city of Monterrey, Nuevo León, Mexico. The categories of Dorfsman (2012) were the foundation of the investigative construct. It is concluded and confirmed that the transition of the training process towards the real practice of the professional practice of the beginning teachers in primary education means that their acting in the classroom is in some cases limited and in other cases benefited by problems and factors of professional and personal type, as well as their initiative and creativity in their teaching work.

Keywords: *Professional practice; primary education; beginning teachers; dimensions of analysis.*

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1. Introduction

The stage of initiation to teaching in basic education, especially at the level of primary education, involves a host of confused experiences, of uneasiness, nervousness and at the same time disappointment. Teachers in their first experiences know the responsibility they have for what happens in their group. Zuloaga (2012), refers that the most significant problem exists between the received training and the demands of an effective and innovative performance. Therefore, it is essential to focus on reflecting on the professional practice that beginning teachers do to strengthen what is difficult for them by proposing alternatives that give them the opportunity to overcome them. Solis et al. (2011), mention that experiences are acquired throughout the teaching work. They say that experiences become effective by assuming three principles: continuity, interaction and reflection. However, when these three principles are not presented in the beginning teachers they present areas of opportunity in their teaching work.

Choosing to be a teacher means choosing a profession considered by many of the students to be difficult, that is because, since they start their practices it is full of challenges, goals that must be met in a short time. The experience gained from their teaching practices during their career depends on what the plans and programs of the normal schools propose. The transition through which students pass from a formation that is given initially to be inserted in teaching and give continuity to their training is complex (Eirin, Garcia and Montero, 2009). It is assumed that beginning teachers who practice their primary education have received the necessary training to face their new task: to work in a group of students between 7 and 12 years old approximately. The grade assigned to them by the school's management must be attended throughout a school year in which the beginning teachers develop the competences in them. Studying about beginning teachers is reflecting on a series of aspects that surround it. This communication focuses on the professional practice of beginning teachers in primary schools, specifically in those factors that hinder teaching performance and face in the classroom.

2. Theoretical Reference

Several studies have been carried out on the subject. It was found that since 1930 Barr and Rudisill (as cited in Marcelo, 1992), conducted an analysis of the teaching practice with 120 teachers with two years of experience, concluding that the main problems they face are the lack of

student motivation, the organization of work, teaching materials and discipline. Vonk (1983), carried out a longitudinal study of 18 beginning teachers. He showed through his results that the main problems of the beginning teacher are the mastery of the contents and the learning material; the organization of the activities in class, the control of the students, the discipline, participation and motivation were the great difficulties to which the teachers faced. Cantu and Martinez (2006), presented an investigation about beginning teachers and their main problems in teaching. They concluded that the academic, organizational, material and technology and social problems are those that are mainly observed in their first years of work to this type of teachers. From the year 2000, Ibero-American level researches were found. Namode Mello (2001), points out in his studies the importance of teaching skills. Mexico as well as other countries such as Argentina, Chile, Uruguay, Granada, Spain, Germany, Brazil, the United States, Canada, Colombia, among others, have devoted themselves to doing research on beginning teachers orienting them to aspects related to class, institution and person.

Conceiro (2010) found in his research a great discrepancy between the nodal contents and the competences that the student teacher should acquire in their teacher training, concluding that novice teachers are insecure when they are involved in the reality during their induction period. Feinman-Nemser (1990), points out that teacher training can be oriented according to five concepts: academic, practical, technical, personal and critical-social. Fenstermacher and Soltis (1999), give importance to knowledge. On the other hand, Shulman (1999), Freinet (1998) and Gutek (2004) assign importance to the pedagogical knowledge specifically to the disciplinary contents. Contreras (1997) agrees with the previous authors, since for him the teaching profession is characterized by aspects such as technical-pedagogical, disciplinary knowledge and moral behavior with the community. Meanwhile in the personal and reflective aspect is located Schön (1998), Fenstermacher and Soltis (1999). For its part Dorfsman (2012) proposes the use of four dimensions: academic-disciplinary, technical-pedagogical, personal-reflective and the critical-social and community teaching profession, it gives the researcher the opportunity to base their application in this study. For this reason, the research is ascribed to its theoretical perspective because it is the model of analysis of Dorfsman through which professional practice is analyzed in this research.

3. Beginning teachers

From the idea of several authors he is called a beginning teacher, a novel teacher, a neophyte teacher, a debutante teacher, a new teacher, to one who is between his first year of service and the fifth year; time in which he is acquiring maximum knowledge, developing skills that allow him to do his teaching. The beginning teacher is a unique person, a facilitator who creates the conditions that lead to learning. For Vera (1988) the beginning teacher is a person, usually young, who is in a moment of transition between knowledge, abilities, skills and attitudes learned over three years of theoretical and practical studies, and the implementation of what has been learned in the real framework of the pedagogical intervention. The beginning teacher experiences in his first years of work in front of a group a process of labor socialization and confirmation of his professional choice; shows a feeling of strangeness in his teaching when it is something that he had already experienced when he was in his professional practices; he works stressed thinking what he wants, what he can and should do; he feels lonely in spite of having schoolmates (Salinas et al., 2009). Beginning teachers live a series of worries and illusions that they overcome over time; likewise, they acquire more experience in the field of teaching; They put all their effort to excel through the achievements and optimize their efforts being practical in the activities they perform, which avoids overwhelming, accepting the culture and institutional dynamics.

4. The professional practice in primary education

A professional practice refers to facts, not to the intentions and competences that the teacher emanates towards his students, in which the learning of his students is enhanced. For the purposes of the research, an analysis was made of the various dimensions considered by several authors and to determine those that would support the study of this practice. Coffield and Edward (2009, as cited in Escudero Munoz, 2009), proposed in their study eight dimensions on which the professional practices are based: context, knowledge, curriculum, pedagogy, evaluation, management, teaching learning and society. While Alexander (1997, as cited in Escudero Munoz), considers five fundamental dimensions: political, evaluative, empirical, pragmatic and conceptual. For Dorfsman (2012), teaching practices are defined as a practice in which the beginning teacher is interested in knowing how their students learn and what they should learn and where professional practice is analyzed from four dimensions of the

teaching work. *The Technical-Pedagogical dimension*, which is characterized as the recognition of the development and learning processes of the students; the identification of educational purposes and didactic approaches to primary education and the recognition of the contents of the current curriculum. *The Academic-Disciplinary dimension*, which refers to the organization and evaluation of educational work and relevant didactic intervention. This defines the ways of organizing the teaching intervention for the design and development of learning situations, the diversification of strategies for its use for improvement purposes and the determination of actions to create favorable environments in the school and the classroom. *The Personal-Reflective dimension* that emphasizes the continuous improvement made by the beginning teacher to support his students in their learning and the appropriation of legal and ethical responsibilities of their profession for their well-being. *The Critical-Social and Community dimension* that includes the distinction of factors that allow to manage education and achieve academic quality, identify actions taking advantage of the support of parents and recognize the characteristics of their context by establishing links with their professional practice.

5. Method, procedure, subjects and instruments

The approach followed was qualitative, so that the analysis that was made allowed to make interpretations and describe each one of the answers given by the beginning teachers and not to generalize results from statistical inferences and without numerical measurement, but to go into special cases like the one in the present investigation. It is considered non-experimental since it is a study that is carried out without the deliberate manipulation of variables and in which only the phenomena are observed in their natural environment and then analyzed (Hernandez, Fernandez, and Baptista, 2010). In this way, the following procedure was carried out: schools and novice teachers who participated in the research were identified, a meeting was held with managers and teachers to inform about the research; in the case of the interviews, they were made in a personal way seeking to coincide in time with the beginning teacher without affecting their class, videotapes of classes worked by the teachers were made.

The selection of the sample was determined to be 15 beginning teachers graduated from the Normal Teacher Training School Ing. Miguel F. Martínez located in the city of Monterrey, Nuevo León, in the northeastern region of Mexico. Some of the criteria were that they were five or less years old, graduates of the 1997 plan, working in primary schools of government

in the morning, afternoon or full-time. The institutions will present a kind of public support; with diverse socioeconomic levels due to its geographical location. A semi structured interview was applied to the 15 beginning teachers to respond with a certain amplitude, granting enough time for the subjects to respond freely and without time pressure. There were 15 free observations, one for each beginning teacher, a class recording, and photographs taken in an unlimited way. Class video recordings, as well as direct observations were made from the observation script, in this way, information was obtained first hand and discreetly through the participants. The information was recorded in the newspaper as it was presented capturing critical incidents at the time.

6. Results

Then, the results derived from both the interviews and the observations about the beginning teachers are presented in a general way.

6.1 Personal, professional and work characteristics of the beginning teachers

The contextualizing characteristics of the beginning teachers are shown in the following concentrator table.

Table 1. Percentage of personal data of beginning teachers

	Indicators	Questioning	Response
Category: Beginning teachers in Primary Education	General	Degree they attend	33% of the beginning teachers attended 1 °, 13% to 2 °, 6% to 3 °, 26% to 4 ° and 20% to 6 °
		Work shift	20% of the beginning teachers worked in the afternoon shift, 13% in full shift and 66% in the morning shift
	Working conditions of beginning teachers at the time of the study	Workload and responsibility of the teacher	86% of the beginning teachers had a workload of 5 hours a day and 13% 8 hours a day
		Commission	46% of the beginning teachers did not have commissions, 26% supported with activities of the Route of improvement, 6% worked an activity of coexistence, 6% served as secretary in Technical Council and 6% was in charge of the escort
		Availability for working overtime	33% of the beginning teachers dedicate 10 hours a week, 20% only 7 hours a week, 13% dedicate 7 and a half hours a week, 13% dedicate 5 hours a week and 20% dedicate 3 hours per week.
	General	Seniority in the system	53% of beginning teachers are 1 year old, 13% are 2 years old, 13% are 3 years old,

characteristics of the Beginning Teacher		6% are 4 years old and 13% are 5 years old.
	Gender	53% are women and 46% are men
	Age	60% of the beginning teachers were in a range of 21 to 25 years and 40% in a range of 26 to 30 years
	Academic background	100% of the beginning teachers have a bachelor's degree and 20% have completed the master's degree with an internship status
	Education from the parents	20% of parents of beginning teachers had secondary education, 20% had a technical degree, 33% had a bachelor's degree, 20% had a master's degree and 6% had a Ph.D.
	Socioeconomic Level	26% of the schools were located in level C, 53% in level D + and 20% in level E
Background of Beginning Teachers	Training institution	100% of the beginning teachers were trained in the ENMFM
	Years of study	100% of the beginning teachers studied 4 years
	Academic level entry and exit	53% remained at the same level when entering and leaving, 20% increased their rating by one point and 6% by one point their average

6.2. Professional practices of the beginning teachers

Other results derived from the interviews and observations are related to the professional practices of the beginning teachers, emphasizing the analysis of four dimensions: Technical-Pedagogical (DTP); Academic-Disciplinary (DAD); Personal-Reflective (DPR) and Critical-Social & Community (DCS & C).

a) Technical-Pedagogical dimension (DTP).

From the results obtained in the first dimension called Technical-Pedagogical and from the narrative made by the participating teachers, a concentration of key words of two general questions was made.

Table 2. Interview. Concentrated answers to the general questions of the DTP.

Dimension	Technical-Pedagogical (DTP)	Key Concepts	
General questions Responses of beginning teachers	GENERAL QUESTIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gradual • Autonomous • Asking • Reflecting • Chatting • Commenting • Listening • Exemplifying • Copying 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interacting • With playful activities • Repeating • Contextualizing • Putting it into practice • Participating • Experiencing • Activating previous knowledge • Working as a team
	1. How do students learn during the professional practice carried out by a beginning teacher? 2. What should students learn in the classroom?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expected learning • Degree program • goals • Abilities • Capacities • Calculation • Reading 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding • Values • To think critically • Interpreting • To analyze problems • Basic knowledge • Rules

The observation phase made it possible to identify that most of the beginning teachers motivate the students to investigate, participate, collaborate, however, a minority does not carry it out. Likewise, it can be mentioned that most of them use different strategies for participation with students. It was detected that all the beginning teachers use elaborated plans according to the plans and programs of study, however, they do not contain all the elements expected by the researcher and that are considered essential. Regarding the differentiated treatment of their students for the construction of their knowledge, it was found that the majority of teachers do give differentiated treatment according to the needs of their students, specifically when the teacher's support is required. In relation to the use of didactic material to approach their class and what kind of material, it was found that a little more than half of the teachers do use it in a varied way before, during and at the end of its content, some of the beginning teachers use it in few occasions.

b) Academic-Disciplinary dimension (DAD).

The questions asked in the interview about the Academic-Disciplinary dimension (DAD) yielded fundamental information about the

teaching work. This information allows to visualize what the beginning teachers do and consider pertinent about the activities related to what they do in the classroom with their students, giving answers to the general questions of this dimension.

The answers given by the beginning teachers focused on key concepts.

Table 3. Interview. Concentrated answers to the general questions of the DAD

Dimension	Academic-Disciplinary (DAD)	Key concepts	
General Questions Responses of the beginning teachers	GENERAL QUESTIONS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule • Planning • Adding reviews • Preparing at home • Structuring ideas • Designing activities • Analyzing what is done • Organizing • Adjusting contents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs of the students • Institutional needs • Start, development and end • Assigning activities to do in home and others in the school • Postponing activities • Adjusting • Preparing materials since holidays
	1. How does the beginning teacher in the classroom organize the educational work before, during and after his professional practice?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Averaging • Jobs • Notebooks • Homework • Instruments • Worksheets • Checklists • In the daily work • Rubrics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hetero-evaluation, co-evaluation and self-evaluation • Pondering each activity • Weekly tests • Considering the differences of the students • Qualitatively and quantitatively
	2. How does the beginning teacher evaluate the educational work of the students in their professional practice?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal attention • Feedback • Specific activities • Integrating them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • From ideas from the support group, language, psychologist • Adjusting contents • Adapting schedules • From results
	3. How does the beginning teacher make a relevant didactic intervention for those students who require it?		

On this dimension it was observed that most of the beginning teachers present a structure of the class and they make it functional through a development, beginning and closure of it; some do it a few times and others do not. Regarding the work with didactic situations elaborated according to the needs of the students, more than half of the professors do it, however, in other teachers it was observed that they do it on a few

occasions and others definitely do not do it at all. In relation to the strategies of organization, participation, explanations, questioning, half of the professors work with them, however, some of them do it in a few occasions and/or in an inadequate way since it is observed that it is not democratic and does not suggest to the students that they question their doubts. It was also observed that there are teachers who do not carry it out. Beginning teachers let see through being observed that most of them use technology and communication in class in addition to other types of materials. The forms of evaluation of various types used by the participating beginning teachers were mostly evident, some did so in a few occasions and inadequately. It was observed that in some cases the teachers do not apply it in their classes. The types of evaluation used by the teachers are the rubrics, checklists, estimation scales, notebook, book reviewed by the teacher only as comparison.

c) Personal-Reflective dimension (DPR).

The third dimension was the Personal-Reflective (DPR). The results obtained allow us to point out what beginning teachers reflect on their own practice, the benefits of preparing themselves academically as teachers and the communication they establish with their peers in the institution in which they work. Likewise, it gave an opportunity to show what beginning teachers reflected on the legal foundations on which their teaching function should be based, the legal principles and purposes of public education, inclusion and equity, the teaching intervention and their expectations. in the institution where they work. In the following table a concentrate of the key concepts is made.

Table 4. Interview. Concentrated answers to the general questions of the DPR

Dimension	Personal-Reflective (DPR)	Key concepts	
The beginning teachers. (DPR)	1. What does the beginning teacher as a professional do to support the students in their learning?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resting • Preparing themselves academically • Designing materials • Preparing themselves professionally • Searching information on the internet • Learning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hearing • Do not giving up • Participating in workshops, courses, diploma courses, art. Culture. • Having attitude • Establishing positive social relationships

2. How does the beginning teacher assume the legal responsibilities inherent to his profession for the welfare of his students?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I do not know • I have not read about legal responsibilities • Complying with rights and duties • Working with schedules, textbooks • Avoiding problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Meeting schedules of entry, departure • Fulfilling my obligations • Committing myself • Caring for school and professional issues • Fulfilling your work, schedule, school calendar
3. How does the beginning teacher assume the ethical responsibilities inherent to his profession for the welfare of his students?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I do not know about the subject • Fulfilling the ethical • Taking the children forward • Making things whether you like them or not • Responsibly • Having the values present • Not having resistance to change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preparing children for society and academics • Being responsible • Fulfilling by vocation • Fulfilling to demand • Taking care of the regulation • Working what is my responsibility • Fulfilling my duties • Committing myself

Through observation and with respect to the collaborative work they do with their classmates, most of the teachers showed that they do it, although some do it in a few occasions and in an inadequate way. Their relationship with the other colleagues of the institution (verbal and non-verbal), gave an opportunity to determine that most teachers do it in their school, very few do it on rare occasions, but inappropriately, since only they do it out of necessity before the work that is approaching them, and some do it in few occasions. In this same sense, but focused on the multidisciplinary group, to which belong the support teacher, the psychologist, the social worker, the language teacher, among others, it was observed that also most of the teachers, in fact, establish this communication with them, while some do it in a few occasions and in an inadequate way, since it is observed that their relationship is not cordial.

The treatment given to the students in class (respect, freedom, tolerance, gender equity, solidarity) was observed in the following way, some of the beginning teachers succeed in their group, some others are not able to carry it out, others do it in few occasions or in an inadequate way, because they allow freedom to be given, but it is detected that at a certain moment they become intolerant with the students. Regarding the concern and occupation that afflicts the beginning teachers, most of them are observed to have students who do not learn the contents addressed in class and are occupied and concerned about them. Very few teachers were detected with little occupation or concern for the students.

d) Critical-Social and Community dimension (DCS & C).

The Critical-Social and Community dimension allows to show the reflection that the beginning teachers do about the factors related to the school management, the actions to take advantage of the support of the parents and the cultural and linguistic characteristics of the community in the institution in which they work.

Table 5. Interview. Concentrated answers to the general questions of the DCS & C

Dimension	Critical-Social and Community (DCS & C)	Key concepts
General Questions Response of the beginning teachers	1. How does the beginning teacher participate in the effective functioning of the school?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doing it right the first time • Idealizing • Fading the backwardness in my group • Complying with work • Coming up with ideas • Doing it fast and better • Complying with times and forms of work • Doing it with quality • Involving in school activities • First asking permission or authorization from the director to act • In agreement • Having a positive attitude • Do not compare myself
	2. How does the beginning teacher foster his or her bond with the community to ensure that all students successfully complete their education?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Performing activities to benefit the school • Giving suggestions • Complying with rules, regulations, commissions • Proposing functional activities • Supporting the manager, colleagues and student • Managing activities, permits • Achieving the purpose • Doing it as requested • Helping in everything • Doing only what is my responsibility
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talking with students and parents • Bringing confidence • Inviting parents to activities • Establishing positive relationships

According to the information obtained through observation in class by the researcher with respect to the work carried out by the beginning teacher it was found that almost all teachers organize and work according to the indications of the school, however, it was observed in a single case that the teacher does it in a few occasions and in an inadequate way, it is perceived that there is no previous organization by the directors. The skills and attitudes of the beginning teacher in the daily work are observed in most

of them when performing activities such as talking, solving situations, installing lights, selling products, fumigating, communicating, convincing, carrying out activities with the use of technology, cleaning, among others and it was only observed that one of the teachers does it in a few occasions, although he has the skills there is no attitude to perform them.

Regarding the activities for the improvement of the school, it was perceived that the majority of those observed do participate in what is requested in the school, be it CTE, improvement route, kermesses, meetings, diverse activities; some of the teachers do it on a few occasions because their lack of enthusiasm is shown to perform them. Based on the participation in campaigns and the school technical council, it was detected that most of the teachers do participate in it, some of the teachers do it in a few occasions and in an inappropriate way, it is detected that they put the parents of family without their participation or do not attend just call.

7. Conclusions

The present investigation allowed to analyze the professional practice of the beginning teachers in primary education. According to the research problem raised, *what is the professional practice of the beginning teachers in primary education and what kind of factors and problems are incidental in the exercise of it?* concludes the following:

In relation to the characteristics of the beginning teachers, they are teachers who have few years of service in front of a group considering themselves as teachers with little experience, they are mostly vulnerable to experienced teachers. The working conditions were in the following circumstances: the majority was placed with the first-grade students; they worked in different shifts, although the morning one prevailed; their workload and teaching responsibilities were mainly in front of a group, without discarding what they must fulfill in the institution and that was requested by the director. The socioeconomic level of most schools was medium-low. His professional practices are dynamic by using varied teaching strategies with diverse materials and resources that consequently generate a harmonious and positive work environment, as well as an assertive communication in his school. It is inclusive and of opportunities to fulfill rights and duties in the classroom.

The problems faced by the beginning teachers in the exercise of their professional practice are:

In the Technical-Pedagogical Dimension (DTP): overwhelming work, lack of updating of textbooks that do not coincide with plans and programs of

study, lack of technology in schools, indiscipline of students, difficulty and ignorance for the application of strategies that allow the academic advance of the group, difficulty to manage specific classroom needs for the students, the teacher or administrative issues.

In the Academic-Disciplinary Dimension (DAD): ignorance of the contents of the grade and information of specific cases of students with SEN to address the expected learning, difficulty to share information in collaborative or team work, difficulty in controlling the discipline specifically when they are saturated with activities at the same moment, limit themselves to search for high summative results of their students in examinations applied by the SE, because they do not ensure learning.

In the Personal-Reflective Dimension (DPR): limited time to design activities in the classroom so they spent time at home, ignorance of legal and ethical issues of their profession, insecurity, fear, concern in their first year of teaching conducted in the classroom, communication and limited provision to establish collaborative networks or positive dialogue to resolve any situation. As issues of laicism and free school, discouragement before the few academic advances of their students and their limited opportunity to obtain optimal results in applied exams, as well as promote in the education system.

In the Critical-Social and Community Dimension (DCS and C): distrust of the parents for having as their children teacher a beginner, insufficient participation of parents in school activities, work in schools of socioeconomic status medium-low, mistreatment or abuse of students by parents, little communication from parents and beginning teachers.

Finally, it is possible to point out that the transition of the training process towards the real practice of the professional practice of the beginning teachers in primary education means that their acting in the classroom is in some cases limited and in others benefited by problems and factors of type professional and personal, as well as his initiative and creativity in his teaching work is confirmed by the researcher. These problems and factors are external and internal issues presented by the actors of the educational scenario, as well as the institutional, cultural, educational and professional context in which the professional practice is developed.

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